# SERMONS

ON THE

# DOCTRINES AND DUTIES

OF

#### CHRISTIANITY.

THIRTY-SECOND EDITION.

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#### TO THE RIGHT REVEREND

#### GEORGE LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

MY LORD.

I Presume to request your Lordship's protection for the following Discourses, though the Author has not the honour of being known to you; because I flatter myself they contain the genuine Doctrines of that Church, of which your Lordship is one of the ablest Pillars. If those Doctrines are expressed in a manner which may be useful to the humble Followers of Christ, for whose instruction and comfort this little work is designed, it will want no other introduction to your Lordship; and if I am permitted to say that it has been honoured with your approbation, it can stand in need of no other recommendation to the public.

I have the honour to be,

With the greatest respect,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's most faithful

And obedient Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

### PREFACE.

THE intention of the following Work is to supply the ignorant, and those who wish to instruct them, with a plain and simple summary of the faith and duty of a Christian; unmixed with controversy, and level to the capacities of those who have not had the advantage of a learned education. If it shall be found to contain nothing new, I beg leave to observe that I consider that circumstance as its greatest merit. Some late experiments give us too much reason to dread novelty in Philosophy and Politics, and it is still more to be

dreaded in Religion. If this Volume contain any doctrine which is not to be proved from Scripture, and was not believed by the Primitive Church, I shall be the first to condemn it, when pointed out to me; for Christianity, like its Great Author, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Having had the happiness of being born and educated in the bosom of the C hurch of England, to which I am most firmly attached, I think it necessary to disclaim all connexion with those who seek out new paths, and presume to find fault with the method of instruction usually employed in our Church. I have always considered the privilege of joining in our excellent Liturgy, and receiving the instructions of a regularly ordained Ministry, as an inestimable blessing. I am fully persuaded, that, taken as a body, the Clergy of the Church of England are not inferior in abilities, in Christian knowledge, or in morals, to any of their opponents; and that those who attend the public service of our Church with an humble wish to receive instruction, will seldom be disappointed. I never heard a sermon from which I did not learn something; and I wish that those who find it otherwise would remember, that half an hour which affords neither information nor amusement, may be well spent by the greatest and wisest men, in setting an example of that respectful attention which is due to the place, and to the office at least, if not to the abilities, of the Preacher.

If these discourses have any merit, it is, that they contain in a narrow compass the instruction which I have myself received from some of the best Writers and Preachers of our Church; and I venture to offer them to the Public, because I have often been at a loss to find sermons for family reading, written in so plain a style that the unlearned might from thence obtain useful

practical instruction, on Christian principles, suited to their situation and habits of life. I do not write for fame, but in the humble hope of being useful to a very respectable class of my fellow Christians; and my utmost ambition will be gratified, if they shall receive instruction and comfort from what is here submitted to their consideration.



## SERMON · I.

ST. MARK XII. 32.

-There is one God, and there is none other but He.

Y text contains the great truth which is the foundation of all that we are to believe, and all that we are to do; of all our hopes, and all our fears; of our consolation in this world, and our happiness in the next. I shall not waste your time in endeavouring to prove what no man, who has common sense, can possibly doubt. The fool may say in his heart, there is no God; but no thinking man will or can believe him. When we look at a house, a ship, or any other work of men, we are immediately convinced that it was not formed by chance;

and when we see what human strength and skill can do, we conclude that such things were made by men like ourselves, and who only differ from us in having applied their strength and skill to those particular purposes.—When we look at a tree, or a flower, at the raging sea, or the stars of heaven, we must be equally convinced that they were not made by chance; and as we know that human strength or skill cannot make them. we must conclude that they are the work of some Being, whose power is much greater than ours. Much more when we reflect on ourselves; on the wonderful contrivance of the Body, and the far more wonderful faculties of the Soul: when we feel and know that we are capable of happiness and of virtue; that we can think, and speak, and act: vet are certain that we did not make ourselves; common sense must convince us, that we were formed by Him, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being;"\* and we must believe that there is a God.—But "no man hath seen GoD at any time!"† and all that we can know of his nature, must be what He has been graciously pleased to reveal to us., From the earliest times God has given laws and instructions to men, and his will has been made known to them either immediately from Himself, as appears to have been the case when He spake to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, and others, and when He pronounced the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai to the whole nation of the children of Israel: or by the ministry of prophets, who on different occasions have been commissioned to declare his will, and by whom the books of the Old Testament were written. "Gop, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."\* Our Saviour Jesus Christ came into the world to teach us our duty, to set us an example, and to die for our sins. proved that he was sent from God, by works which no man can do by his own power. He opened the eyes of the blind, he healed the sick. he cast out devils, he raised the dead. Above all, after having been publicly put to death as a malefactor, he rose triumphant from the grave, lived and conversed forty days with his disciples on earth, and then ascended into Heaven, in the presence of numbers who afterwards laid down

their lives to prove the truth of those things which they had themselves seen and heard. These men, to whom our Saviour gave a commission to preach the Gospel to all nations, wrote the Books of the New Testament; and in these books, which, with the Old Testament, make up the sacred volume which we call the Bible, we may find all the information that is necessary for us, in regard to the nature of God, and our duty to Him; we may learn how to behave in every situation in this world, and to look beyond this world to the happiness which is promised to every good man after death. To that book, then, we must apply for information; and from that book I will endeavour to collect the substance of what we are required to believe and to do, in order to obtain the salvation which is there promised to all the faithful servants of God. I hope to do this in such a plain and simple manner as may be understood by all; may be useful to those who have not the advantage of being able to read the Bible themselves; and may afford satisfaction to those who are already well acquainted with that sacred book, by bringing to their remembrance what ought never to be forgotten.

The first words of the Bible contain a great and most important truth: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."\* Here we may learn the answer to the question, how we and the world we live in were made. God created, God produced out of nothing, all that we see in this beautiful world. He spake, and it was done. In six days GoD created the world, furnished it with plants and animals, and made man in his own image to rule over it; "and God saw every thing that He had made, and behold it was very good."† Every thing then was perfect in its kind; and the appointed ruler of all, Adam, formed in the image of God, was wise, was virtuous, and was happy. For him God formed a companion, a friend, and a wife, innocent and virtuous as himself, to complete his happiness by sharing it with him, to deserve and possess his love, and to join with him in serving and in praising their great Creator. To this happy pair GoD gave the garden of Eden, with all things in it richly to enjoy; and GoD said, " of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day

<sup>\*</sup> Gen. i. 1. + Gen. i. 31.

that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."t Obedience to this command was the proof required of their love and gratitude to Him who gave them all; but this command was broken. Through envy of the devil death came into the world. From the Bible we learn that a fallen Angel, who had himself lost his happiness by rebelling against God, took the form of a serpent, " She and persuaded the woman to transgress. took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat."\* From this moment all is changed. Conscious of guilt, and trembling with apprehension of the threatened punishment, they hid themselves in the garden; vainly hoping, or at least wishing, to escape from the all-seeing eye of Gon. Asit has been justly observed by an excellent writer, "In the state of innocence Adam ran to meet Gop; and the intercourse with his Divine Instructor was the most exalted delight of Paradise. But when innocence was gone, he sought the shelter of the deepest cover; and on being calledforth out of it, returned for answer, with a dejection never known before, 'I heard thy voice,

and I was afraid." That voice pronounced the sentence. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake."‡ "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." If any person should be surprised that the trial to which Adam was exposed was of so trifling a nature, and that his happiness or misery should depend on his eating, or not eating, the fruit of a tree; I beg him to consider, first, that Adam, in his situation, could not be guilty of what we regard as the greatest crimes. He could not commit murder. when he was the only man; nor adultery, when his wife was the only woman. He could not steal, when he was already in possession of every thing around him; nor commit any other injury to his fellow creatures, while he was alone on the earth. Secondly, that, in reality, every thing which can draw us away from the service of God, whether it be honour, power, riches, or pleasure, is as trifling, as unworthy of our regard, as truly contemptible, as the forbidden fruit. And lastly, that in fact the trial of Adam was

<sup>†</sup> Sermons by the Rev. Dr. Randolph. † Gen. iii. 17. § Gen. iii. 19.

exactly like that of every other man; the question was not whether he would or would not taste of the fruit, but whether he would or would not obey God; whether he would submit to the revealed will of his Creator, and not attempt to be wise above that which he was taught, but humbly and constantly observe whatever directions he had received from God.

Such is the account which Scripture gives us of the fall of man; and from the same authority we learn, that the consequences of this event extend to all the children of Adam; that having lost his innocence, and corrupted his nature, all who descend from him are born weak and imperfect, inclined to sin, and under sentence of death. It is of great importance that this should be clearly understood, in order that we may know, and feel how much we owe to the great deliverer of the human race, Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that without holiness no man can see God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and the best man in the world, if he look into his own heart, must acknowledge that he is very imperfect, that his nature is inclined to sin, and that if he depend on his own righteousness, he must tremble to appear before God.

therefore perfect obedience were required, every one of us must appear guilty before Gop. But our merciful Creator did not place any human being in this dreadful situation; for even before He pronounced the sentence on Adam, he gave the promise of mercy, in this remarkable prophecy,—The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. The whole history of the Old and New Testament is a comment on these words. From every part of it we learn, that this promised seed of the woman, our Saviour Jesus CHRIST, the Son of Gop, offered himself as a sacrifice for the sin of the whole world; that "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive;"\* that, through his merits, every son of Adam may hope for mercy and acceptance, if he believe in him, and humbly endeavour to do his will. He has brought life and immortality to light. He will give us much more than Adam lost. He will place us in a better Paradise, he will make us for ever happy, if, during our short trial in this world, we put our whole trust in Him, and endeavour to obey all his commandments; and even if we are-so unhappy as to fail in our obedience, and to commit sin, we have his

promise of pardon on our sincere repentance. "He is the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."\* Through the whole history contained in the Bible, from the fall of Adam to the birth of CHRIST, we find every thing connected with that great event. Sacrifices were immediately appointed, and have been offered in every part of the world, to keep up the remembrance of him, who was afterwards to be offered as a sacrifice for all mankind; and they were accepted of God, when they were accompanied by faith in CHRIST. When God, for the wickedness of man, destroyed the whole human race by a flood of water, Noah and his family were spared, and the everlasting covenant was renewed with them. When Abraham was called of God, he was told that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. When it pleased GoD to separate the children of Israel from other nations, and to give them a law from heaven, it was to keep up the expectation of the promised Redeemer by the ceremonies of that law; and particularly by the sacrifice of the Lamb at the feast of the Passover, to represent the Lamb of God which was to be offered for the sin of the

whole world. Of him Moses spake; to him gave all the Prophets witness; and on him were fixed the hopes of every good man; for these all lived and died in faith, though they had not received the promise, but they saw it afar off, and went on their way rejoicing; looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith, the Mediator of the new Covenant, the Saviour and Redeemer of the world.

To him then let us come, with humble and penitent hearts; not trusting in our own righteousness, but in the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sin of the whole world, which he made upon the cross for our redemption. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves;"\* all have sinned; all flesh is corrupt before GoD; and it is impossible that by our own strength we can attain the holiness which is necessary to please Him. But our gracious God does not require what we are unable to perform. He pities our weakness, and accepts our sincere though imperfect endeavours, through the merits and mediation of Christ. Let all our hopes be fixed on him. Let us diligently study the directions he has left us in the New Testament. Let us believe what is there revealed, and practise what is there taught.; and having used our best endeavours to know his will, and humbly to perform it, let us cast all our care on him, who has promised that he will guide us with his counsel, and after death receive us into glory. Now to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests to God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

### SERMON II.

#### ST. JOHN i. I.

In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God.

N my last discourse I endeavoured to give you a short account of what God has been pleased to reveal to us in the Old Testament, concerning the creation of the world, the fall of man, and the mercy promised to him through the expected Redeemer; earnestly wishing that the little I said on those subjects may increase the diligence of the serious Christian in the study of that sacred book, which of late has been too much neglected. I will venture to say, on the authority of the best judges, that if the Bible were only to be considered as the work of man, it has still every claim to attention, from the

beauty and simplicity of the histories it relates, the wisdom of the instruction it contains, and the information which it gives us on many subjects. in which we are all deeply interested. Who can read the story of Joseph without pleasure? Who can read the account of the flood without terror? Where shall we find a description of friendship so interesting as that of David and Jonathan? Where shall we meet with such useful instruction as in the Proverbs of Solomon? But if we believe that "all scripture is given by inspiration of Gop, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;"\* surely we shall then receive the word with all readiness of mind, and search the Scriptures daily.

The plan which I have proposed to myself does not allow me to dwell longer on the interesting subjects which are to be found in the Old Testament; but earnestly recommending that sacred book to the serious and attentive perusal of all who have it in their power to study it as it deserves, I proceed to the consideration of what is revealed to us in the New Testament, concerning him of whom Moses in the law, and

the Prophets, did write, Jesus the Son of God. I propose, by the blessing of God, to lay before you, in a few words, the doctrine of the Scripture and of our Church concerning Christ our Saviour; and to consider the blessings which we and all mankind enjoy at present, and hope to receive after death, through his merits and mediation.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with Gop, and the Word was Gop."\* " And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."† From this sublime description. compared with many other parts of scripture, we learn that the Word was Gop and was man. We are told that our Saviour Jesus Christ. called by St. John the Word, was the Son of Gop; that all things were made by him; that he is King of kings, and Lord of lords; that to him every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; that he is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. But we are also told thathe was made man; that he took our nature upon him, and humbled himself even to the death

<sup>•</sup> John i. 1. + John i. 14.

upon the cross. We must not ask, with Nicodemus, how can these things be? We must not be surprised, if poor, weak; ignorant creatures, as we are, cannot comprehend the nature of the great Gon of Heaven. We are equally ignorant how our own soul and body make one man; and if we were never to believe what we'do not perfectly understand, we should believe nothing, know nothing, and do nothing. It is sufficient for us to know, what we are told in the Bible. that our Saviour was God, and for our sakes was made man; that he and the Father are one; and that all men are to honour the Son; even as they honour the Father. We are told that he suffered for our salvation, rose again the third day, ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of Gon; that according to his promise, he sent to his disciples another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Ghost, who will abide with his faithful servants for ever, and guide them into all truth; and that by the direction of our Lord himself, every Christian is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Let us not presume to enquire further than God has been pleased to reveal to us, or be wise above what is written; but let us give glory to the Pather, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.

But though the secret things belong to GoD. the things which are revealed belong to us and to our children; and though our eyes cannot see the glory of God, yet since our blessed Saviour for our sakes was pleased to appear on earth as man, and to suffer for us, we are allowed. and commanded, to look upon him with the eye of faith, to trust in his merits, to observe his instructions, and to imitate his example. We cannot see him as the Apostles did, for he is again ascended to his Father; but we must attentively read and consider what is told us in the New Testament. There we find a full account of the life and death of our blessed LORD, which should be the constant study of every Christian; and from thence we may collect the following particulars, among many others.

Our Saviour Jesus Christ was pleased to be born, and to live, in a state of poverty. His youth was spent in submission to his parents; and during the first thirty years of his life, he appears to us only as a pattern of humility and obedience. When he afterwards appeared as a teacher sent

from Gop, he instructed the ignorant, he reproved the guilty, he comforted the afflicted. He bore all the insults of his enemies with patience and meekness. He went about doing good. He was kind even to the unthankful, and prayed for his murderers. His bitterest enemies. Jews and Gentiles, joined to attest his uprightness. " Have thou nothing to do with that just man," said the wife of Pilate. Pilate himself declared. "I find no fault in this man." Judas, who had every possible opportunity of knowing the character of his Master, cried out in the agony of despair, "I have betrayed the innocent blood." And the Roman centurion who watched at the cross, gave in his evidence, "Certainly this was a righteous man." His delight was to do the will of his father. He spent whole nights in prayer. He observed the sabbathday, and the public service of the Church; and in the performance of every duty, to GoD and to man, he has left us an example that we should follow his steps.

But he was not only the best of men, he was much more. He spake as never man spake; and he performed miracles which no man could per-

<sup>\*</sup> Bishop Horne's Sermons.

form, except God were with him. He restored sight to the blind; he raised the dead; he said to the storm, "Peace, be still." "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"† Even the devils were forced to to confess that he was the Son of the Most High Gop. In him were fulfilled all the ancient prophecies. We may read these prophecies in the Old Testament, and their wonderful accomplishment in the New; and we shall see that they can be applied to no other person who ever appeared in the world. JESUS CHRIST Was himself the greatest of prophets. He foretold that Judas should betray, and that Peter should deny him. He foretold the time and the manner of his death, and his glorious resurrection. He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and pointed out the time, by circumstances which enabled all the Christians to escape from the punishment prepared for them who uttered at his crucifixion those dreadful words, "His blood be on us and on our children."\* These and many other propheeies, extending even to the end of the world, have, in every age, proved the divinity of Christ; and they will continue to do so, till the last shall

<sup>+</sup> Matt. viii. 27. \* Matt. xxvii. 25.

be fulfilled, when his murderers shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. To crown every other proof of divinity, he rose from the grave, and ascended into heaven. Can any man consider these things, and not cry out with the centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God?"† But we have higher witness than that of man; the voice of God himself proclaimed from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him."\*

There is still another light in which our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to us; there is another character in which he commands all our veneration, gratitude, and love. Though he was born in a stable, and laid in a manger, a choir of angels attended to proclaim his birth; and they did it in these consoling words, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.?" The holy child Jesus shall not only be the best of men, a teacher sent from God, nay, the Son of God himself;—great and glorious as these characters are, they offer no hope to sinful man;—but he

<sup>†</sup> Matt. xxvii. 54. P Matt. xvii. 5. | Luke it. 10, 11.

shall be a Saviour. He shall die for our sins; he shall reconcile us to God; he shall take away the handwriting that is against us, nailing it to his cross; he shall bring life and immortality to light; he shall guide us by his spirit, and after death he shall receive us into glory. These are, indeed, glad tidings to every son of fallen Adam: and cold and insensible must that heart be, which does not join in the triumphant song of the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."\*

This, my brethren, is the great, the distinguishing doctrine of the Gospel; this is the corner stone of Christianity. "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world;" put all your trust in him; look unto him and be saved, all ye ends of the earth. "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep." The great Captain of our salvation has overcome death, and opened to us the gate of everlasting life. He has shewed us the way to heaven; he will lead us to eternal glory.

But let us not forget that these glorious promises are made only to the faithful servants of

CHRIST. Let us not forget that when our Saviour redeemed the world, he did it to purchase to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He has told us that we must take up the cross and follow him. He has shewn us the path of life, and promised to assist our humble endeavours by his holy spirit; but he has told us, that strait is the gate, and narrow the way, and that we must exert our utmost powers to enter into it.

It shall be my endeavour, by the blessing of God, to explain to you the particular duties which we are commanded to perform, and to enforce them by the example of our blessed Saviour, as pointed out to us in the New Testament; at present I will only mention the following awful consideration, which I earnestly wish to impress most strongly on the minds of all who hear me. Though Christianity holds out the most comfortable hopes of assistance to the weak, consolation to the afflicted, and pardon to the penitent; it offers no hope while we continue in any known or habitual sin.

Repentance, faith, and obedience, are the indispensable conditions of the Christian covenant. We must believe in the Son of God, who alone is able to save; not trusting in our own merits, but in his manifold and great mercies; but we must add to our faith, virtue; and by patient continuance in well-doing, we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

Be not deceived, but attend to the words of St. Paul. "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."\* O terrible voice of most just judgment, which shall be pronounced on all obstinate sinners; "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."†

But they who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts: they walk religiously in good works by the assistance of his grace; and when they have finished the work which he gave them to do, they will know that their labour has not been in vain. Their Lord will return from a far country, to demand an account of the talents he had entrusted to their care; and happy are those to whom he shall say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

1 Matt. xxv. 21.

### SERMON III.

st. john vi. 38.

I came down from Heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.

Scripture what we are permitted to know of the nature and office of the Son of God, and considered him as our Creator and Redeemer; I will now proceed to point out to you what we may learn from the same sacred book of his character as man, and shew in what respect he has left us an example that we should follow his steps. Even as man we must follow him at a humble distance. None of us can say, "which of you convinceth me of sin?"\* None of us can

<sup>\*</sup> John viii. 46.

go through all the troubles, and perform all the duties, of life without any imperfection or error. And as we cannot attain to the perfection of his virtue, we have also some duties to perform which could not belong to a character in which was no fault. He had no need of repentance, self-examination, and all the humble duties of sinful man. But there are many parts of his character which we can and ought to imitate, that we may follow as closely as possible the great example which is set before us; and, in order to consider these more distinctly, I will take a view of his conduct towards God, and towards man.

Our Saviour tells us in my text, that he came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him; and this is evident through every part of his life. In his childhood, when his parents returned to Jerusalem seeking him, and found him in the temple, he thus addressed them, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"\* In the course of his ministry he said to his disciples, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work."† Before his death, in his last solemn dedication of himself to God, he says, "I have

<sup>\*</sup> Luke ii, 49. + John iv. 34.

finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."‡ In his agony in the garden, though he prayed most earnestly, that if it were possible that cup might pass from him, he added, "' Not my will, but thine be done;"\* and having performed that will by his dreadful sufferings on the cross; having by his full, perfect, and all-sufficient sacrifice, taken away the sin of the world; then, and not till then, he says, "Father! into thy hands I commend my spirit."†

This, my Christian brethren, is the great example, which every one of us is called to follow, in that station in which it has pleased God to place him. We all were sent into this world, not to do our own will, but the will of our Father which is in heaven. Piety towards God is the first and great duty of a Christian; and the difference between a good and a bad man is this—that the good man endeavours to do the will of God, the bad man does his own will. We may see the difference even in those who are not guilty of what are called great crimes; and we may see it in every circumstance of life. The man who is without God in the world, is constantly engaged in the pursuit of riches, or plea-

<sup>†</sup> John xvii. 4. Luke xxii 42 + Luke xxiii. 46.

sure, or whatever he thinks will contribute most to his happiness on earth. When he rises in the morning, he considers, how he can in the course of the day get most money, or enjoy most In his behaviour to other men he is perhaps honest, because he is afraid of the laws of his country; good-natured, when it does not interfere with his own interest; a good husband and father, if he love his wife or children, and as long as they contribute to his pleasure; a good subject, if he have sense enough to see that it is every man's interest to be one. Such a man may pass through life with a decent character; for if he be prudent, and really consider only his own comfort in this world, he will take care of his affairs, he will endeavour to gain friends, and he will avoid vices which are always attended with shame and misery; but all this while he is not a good man, because he does his own will. and not the will of Gop. When the hour of trial comes, this will be often evident to the world, as it always is to the eye of Gop. If it should happen that this man could get some great advantage by dishonesty, in a way which did not expose him to shame or punishment, what Adam, "In the sweat of thy face thou must should restrain him from doing it? If sickness or vexation should ruffle his temper, he is no longer the pleasant companion, the kind husband or father. If bad company entire him to join in riot or rebellion, from which he expects some advantage-to himself, he is no longer a loyal subject. In short, whenever he thinks it for his interest to do wrong, there is reason to fear that he will do it, for he has no principles to prevent him. And when the hour comes, which must come to all, when the body returns to the dust of which it was formed, and the spirit returns to God who gave it; with what comfort can that man look back on his past life? With what hope can he look forward to the judgment of the great day?

But the good man has the fear of God always before his eyes, and the love of God always in his heart. When he begins each day, he considers how he can best please God; he resigns himself to his direction, he trusts in his care, he humbly prays for his assistance, and then goes on his way rejoicing. He follows the honest duties of his station, because God has said to every son of eat bread."\* If he be rich and prosperous in

life, he does not consider that as a reason why he should be idle. He knows that to whom much is given, of him shall be much required; and he endeavours to do all the good he can. If he be poor and distressed, he knows it is the will of Gop, and he submits with cheerfulness. He remembers that his Saviour was poor, that he had not where to lay his head; and he knows that the same Saviour is able to raise the poorest and meanest man on earth to be the greatest in heaven. He is honest, though no eye behold him, for he knows that he cannot be hid from the sight of God. He is cheerful, because his mind is free from the guilt of any deliberate sin, and full of the hopes of immortality. He is kind to all his relations and friends, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward; for his sake who maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good. He is kind even to his enemies, after the example of him who prayed for his murderers. He is loyal and faithful to his king. because the King of kings commands it. At the close of every day he considers whether he has done the will of Goo, in that station to which He has called him. He endeavours to recollect all his faults, and he humbly begs forgiveness

through JESUS CHRIST; he prays for his friends and relations, and even for his enemies; and then in charity with all the world, he lays him down in peace, and takes his rest. He sees the hand of God in every thing. In prosperity, he thanks him for the blessings he enjoys; in affliction, he acknowledges the kind severity of his Heavenly Father. In sickness, he is humble and patient; in death, he is resigned and happy. He is found in his Father's house, the church; and is constant in all the public as well as private duties of religion. In every action of life he considers what is his duty. He asks with St. Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and when he has finished his appointed work, and is called to receive the reward which has been graciously promised to every good and faithful servant, still looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of his faith, he may with humble hope and pious resignation say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!"

And now, my brethren, let me entreat every one who hears me, to consider with himself to which of these descriptions of men he belongs. The question is of infinite importance, for his

happiness or misery in the next world depends All other distinctions must be ended by death; high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, all will then be equal; but this most important of all distinctions will remain for ever. It is a question which every man must ask of his own conscience, and which only his own conscience can answer. We must not presume to decide on the characters of other men, except as far as their words and actions are known to us. God only knows their hearts. It is true that a good and a bad man may in many respects act in the same manner. Both may preserve a decent appearance to the world; both may eat the bread of honest industry, and appear to lead a harmless life, and yet their hearts may be very different; but He only who knows the heart, can tell this: we must always be careful to guard against uncharitable suspicions, for charity thinketh no evil. If our neighbour live in open neglect of his duties to God and man, we ought to express our dislike of such conduct; but when he appears to act rightly, we should not allow ourselves to suspect his motives, without very good reason for doing But in your own case, you cannot be too watchful, or too suspicious; and in order to know

the real state of your souls, let me earnestly recommend to you a duty which is too much neglected by many who call themselves Christians, -the duty of self-examination. Every Christian, before he goes to rest, should consider how he has spent the day, and ask himself such questions as these. Did I in the morning offer up my prayers to God? Have I done my duty in the station to which He is pleased to call me? Have I been honest, industrious, temperate, Have I been kind to my relations and friends, and made them as happy as I could? Have I done any injury to any body? Have I done any good to any body? Upon the whole, can I give a good account of this day, when I stand before the judgment-seat of Christ? O my Christian brethren, consider the importance of these questions, and judge yourselves, that you may not be judged of the Lord. If your heart condenn you, humbly on your knees confess your sin to Goo, and try to make your peace with Him before you sleep: He will forgive, if we will repent. The duty which I now recommend, may appear difficult to those who have never practised it; but those who are accustonied to perform it, know the comfort it affords.

## SERMON IV.

## ST. MATTHEW iii. 13.

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him.

HAT constant regard to the will of God which was the subject of my last discourse, will shew itself in obedience to his commands of every kind, and make us diligent in the performance of every duty, to God and to our neighbour.

Our duty to God requires that we should not only pay Him the hidden worship of the heart, but also that we should observe all the ordinances of religion which He has appointed. We must not only serve Him in our closets by prayer and self-examination, but we must also, in obedience to his commands, attend the public worship of his church: we must receive the sacraments which he has ordained, observe his sabbaths. honour his holy name and word, and publicly as well as privately shew that we are his disciples; and in this our Saviour has been pleased to be our pattern, as well as our instructor. From his example we learn the most exalted piety. He prayed earnestly; he was constant in his attendance on public worship, and in the observance of the sabbath; and St. Matthew informs us in my text that he was baptized. "Though he was a son, yet learned he obedience;"\* and though he knew no sin, yet for our sakes he condescended to leave an example of submission to every ordinance of God, by using the appointed means of purification in the sacrament of baptism. "Suffer it to be so," said our LORD to St. John the Baptist. " for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."† With this great example always before our eyes, I propose to consider the public duties appointed in the Christian church, to explain the nature and use of each, and to enforce the duty of obedience to all the ordinances of the Lorn.

Before I enter on these subjects, let me beg you to remember the reverence which is due to the

<sup>•</sup> Heb. v. 8.

church of CHRIST, and to the appointed ministers of the gospel; and let me earnestly intreat you not to follow strange teachers. Many of them may be good men, and I hope they are so; but let them not lead you from the appointed place of worship, and the appointed minister, to whom CHRIST has given authority to watch over your souls. We are told that even our Saviour took not this honour on himself, but was called of God. We are told, that before his death he laid his hands on his apostles, and appointed them to preach and baptize in his name. We know that those apostles appointed others; and even to this day every man who is to speak in the name of Christ, and to administer his sacraments, ought to be lawfully ordained by the bishops of Christ's church. These are the shepherds whom Christ has commanded to feed his flock; and no man ought to take this honour to himself. All clergymen, before they are allowed to exercise this holy office, are instructed in the religion which Gop has revealed; and care is taken that they should be properly qualified to teach others. They are the lawful ministers of CHRIST; the sacraments which they administer are given by his authority; the prayers which they read are

the appointed service of the church; and the humble Christian who joins with them in worship, does his duty, and has every reason to hope for all the benefits promised by our Saviour to his church. If the sermon be not always so edifying as it might be, let him charitably excuse the defects of his teachers, and never forget the respect that is due to their office. The sermon is not the most important part of the service, though it is much to be wished that it should always be such as might be most for the benefit of those who hear it. The most important part is joining in public prayer and thanksgiving to God, and hearing his word, in the place and the manner which our church directs, and under the authority of a minister who is lawfully qualified to administer the sacraments which CHRIST has ordained. If we leave the church, and are led by idle curiosity to listen to those who intrude into another man's fold, we know not into what errors we may be led. We cannot be certain that we shall hear the true doctrine of the church; we cannot be certain that we shall hear prayers in which we ought to join; and even if the preacher should be better qualified to instruct you than your own minister, still we are commanded to

listen to those who are appointed to rule over us, and shun those who make divisions in the church. All such divisions should be avoided. "There is one body," the church, "and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

I proceed now to consider those public duties of our church, which no Christian ought to neglect; and the first which our religion requires is that which is mentioned in my text. We all become members of Christ's church by baptism. This sacrament has always been the distinguishing mark of Christians; and it is particularly ordained by our Saviour Christ himself; for in his last solemn charge to his anostles he says, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost."† obedience to this command, we find the apostles constantly exhorting all their hearers to repent and be baptized; and the practice of the church hath been at all times the same. This sacrament is the appointed means to cleanse us from

<sup>\*</sup> Eph. iv. 4.

the guilt of original sin, to make us again children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. In it we renounce the devil and all his works, we profess our belief in all the articles of the Christian faith, and we promise to observe God's holy will and commandments all the days of our lives.

We who have the happiness to be born in a Christian country, are baptized when we are too young to know any thing of the nature and use of this sacred ordinance; and too many who are called Christians, pass their lives without ever seriously considering it. I earnestly recommend to every person to read with attention the form of baptism in our book of common prayer, and to consider the solemn promise which was made in his name. A christening is too often considered only as a feast, an occasion of mirth, and perhaps even of intemperance. It is indeed a season of rejoicing, but we should rejoice like Christians. The parents, whom Gon has blest with a child, have reason to rejoice and to praise Him; their neighbours and friends should rejoice with them; but still they should remember the importance of that duty for which they are called together. To the parents God has committed

the care of a creature formed to live for ever in happiness or in misery; to them He has given the important charge of instructing that child in his duty, of setting him a good example, and gently leading him in the paths of religion and virtue. When they see that child dedicated to the service of God in baptism, let them seriously reflect on the importance of the task which they have to perform. To the godfathers and godmothers the minister gives a charge which they too often entirely neglect; but I wish them to consider that they must answer for that neglect at the day of judgment. In the presence of God they have made a solemn promise, which binds them to see that the child be taught his duty to GoD; and if the parents neglect this, the godfathers and godmothers are bound to perform it to the best of their abilities. On this account it is to be wished that those who answer for the child should be relations, neighbours, or friends of the parents; who may have it in their power to pay some attention to the child, in case of the neglect or the death of those who ought to perform this duty. To all who may be present on this awful occasion, I beg leave to address myself as to Christians who are assembled, not merely to a

family meeting and a feast, but to dedicate a newborn infant to the God who made, and to the Saviour who redeemed it. If they consider this as it deserves, they will perceive that there is not a more interesting or affecting sight than baptism. \*When we see a human being, with his eye just opening on the world, presented free from actual guilt before the God who created it, dedicated to the Saviour, without whose redeeming love it had better never have been born, receiving in so solemn a manner the privileges of the Christian covenant, and engaged to be a faithful servant of Christ; every person, who is capable of reflection, thinks, at the same time, of the difficulties which that harmless infant must meet with in its passage through this wicked world. When we follow a pious and virtuous friend to the grave, however we may feel our own loss, we ought to rejoice at the blessed change which he has experienced. Sin and misery have no more power over him; he can never more be exposed to temptation, or lose the favour of his God. His trial is past, and he is for ever happy. But when we look at the infant, who is just entering on this state of trial, in which he must meet with many tempta-

<sup>\*</sup> Sce Meditations of a Recluse.

tions as well as many sorrows, and on which his eternal happiness or misery depends, surely we shall rejoice with trembling. Every pious heart will share the feelings of a Christian parent, and join in earnest prayer to God for him who cannot as yet pray for himself; committing the little infant to the protection of that Saviour whose soldier he now is, with whose cross he has been signed, and whose example he is bound to follow.

To give the Christian an opportunity of professing his determination to believe and to do what his godfathers and godmothers promised in his name, and to obtain for him, by the prayer of the Bishop, the assistance of the Holy Spirit, another ceremony is appointed in the church. which is called Confirmation. This sacred ordinance is often shamefully neglected amongst us; but the first Christians considered it as a necessary part of baptism; and it ought certainly to be observed by every person who has an opportunity of being presented for that purpose to the Bishop. Every young person should be taught the principles of the Christian religion, as explained in our excellent Catechism; and when he is duly sensible of the necessity of a Redeemer, and the gratitude which he ought to feel to our blessed

Saviour; when he has learnt his duty, and is fully resolved, by the assistance of God's grace, to perform it; he should publicly profess this resolution by being confirmed. The Bishop, as head of the church under CHRIST, and acting by his authority, then lays his hand on him, and offers up a solemn prayer, that the Holy Spirit may assist the young Christian to perform the promise he has just made. Without the assistance of the Holy Spirit we can do nothing; but we must not expect that assistance, unless we use the means which GoD has appointed to obtain it; and those means are, devout and earnest prayer, confirmation, and receiving the holy communion; of which last I hope to speak more fully in my next discourse. before I conclude the subject of our meditation at present, let me remind all parents, that it is their duty to see that their children are properly instructed and prepared for confirmation; and if they neglect this, or if GoD be pleased to call them to himself before they can perform it, the sureties of the child should endeavour to fulfil the promise they made at his baptism.

Those who are not themselves sufficiently instructed to teach their children, should make use of every proper assistance which they can procure.

Every pious minister would wish to assist them; and in many parishes there are Sunday-Schools. where children may learn theirduty. Byconstant attendance at church, and a habit of attentively listening to the Lessons and to the Sermon, they may learn a great deal; and indeed it is hardly possible, that in this country any person should be ignorant of his duty, except it be his own fault. God will never require more than we are able to do; and at the day of judgment it will not be asked whether we were learned, but whether we are humble, pious, and virtuous. But God does require us to do all that we can. We must use every means of instruction, for ourselves and for our children, with which He has blessed us. We must diligently attend to our teachers; we must try to remember what we hear, and we must practise what we learn. Most of us, I am afraid, know more of our duty than we choose to perform; but none of us must hope that ignorance will be an excuse, till we have taken all possible pains to be informed of our duty, and have constantly endeavoured to perform it. Our LORD gives to some ten talents, to some five, and to others only one. To whom much is given, of him shall be much required; but if he who has only one talent make

no use of it, he must expect the dreadful sentence, "cast yè the unprofitable servant into outer-darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."\* Consider this, I beseech you every one. Whether we be rich or poor, old or young, learned or ignorant, we have all much to do. All must work the work of Gop. All must endeavour to know his will, and to perform it to the utmost of their power. All must humbly entreat his pardon, when they fail in their duty; and all must beg the assistance of his Holy Spirit to enable them to perform it. In order to obtain that assistance, all must attend the public worship of the church. They who have children, must bring them to be baptized and confirmed. All must observe the duties of the Lord's day, and gladly embrace every opportunity of receiving the holy sacrament. And may all tow hom God has given the inestimable blessing of being born in a Christian country, and educated by pious parents, remember how much they owe to those who teach them their duty, and point out to them the way of eternal life. May all young persons frequently reflect on the promises made for them in baptism. and on the blessings they may receive from the

<sup>\*</sup> Matt. xxv. 30.

Christian covenant. May they remember their Creator in the days of their youth; and then He will not forget them when the evil days come, and the years in which there is no pleasure; He will not forsake them when they are grey-headed. May they never forget that they were signed with the cross in baptism, that they might fight manfully under the banner of CHRIST, against the world, the flesh, and the devil. May they never forget the vows which were made for them by their sureties in baptism, and renewed by themselves in confirmation; but through every part of their lives, in youth and in age, as children, as men, as husbands, as fathers, may they always act as Christians. May this title be their highest glory; may it raise them above this world, and make them constantly endeavour to follow the example of Him, by whose name they are called: to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory now and for ever. Amen.

## SERMON V.

## ST. LUKE XII. 19.

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me.

that when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." The evening before his death was spent with his chosen friends, in a manner which it seems impossible they should ever forget. He confirms their faith, he instructs them in their duty, he promises them another comforter to abide with them for ever. He strengthens them to meet the

trials and persecutions to which they must soon be exposed; and he bids them be of good cheer for he had overcome the world. He exhorts them to love one another, as he had loved them: and he commends them to the care and protection of his heavenly Father, in the admirable prayer which you may read in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's gospel. It was at this interesting moment, when he was offering himself as a sacrifice on the cross for the sin of the world, when he was immediately to suffer a most painful and cruel death, it was at that awful period, that our Saviour instituted the holy Communion. "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." This was the last command of our dying Master; and if no benefit to ourselves were to be expected from the performance of this duty, still it might have been supposed impossible that any Christian could neglect to give this proof of obedience to his Saviour, his Redeemer, and his Gop.

there one amongst us who; having received such a command from a dying parent or friend, could possibly forget to perform it? And yet I fear there are many who call themselves Christians, and who yet live and die without ever offering to their crucified Master this appointed testimony of gratitude and love. The reason of this strange and shameful neglect of such an easy command, in those from whom better things might be hoped, is commonly some mistaken notion of this holy sacrament; and in order to remove such mistakes, I will lay before you what I believe to be the doctrine of scripture, and of our church, on this subject. That I may be the better understood, I will endeavour,

First, to explain the nature of this sacrament. Secondly, to answer some objections which have been made on this subject.

Thirdly, to show the advantage to be expected from frequent communion.

And lastly, to point out the proper manner of performing this sacred duty.

In order to understand the nature and meaning of this holy sacrament, we should consider, that sacrifices of some kind or other have always been appointed to be offered up to God, as a testimony

of our obedience and gratitude to Him, as a representation of the great sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, and as the means of conveying to the true believer the benefits of that sacrifice which was offered for the sin of the whole world. Such were the sacrifices offered by Abel, by Neak, by Abraham, and by all the faithful from the beginning of the world; and such were the sacrifices which Gop ordained in the law of Moses. We every where find that something is required on our part, in order to our receiving the benefits which GoD is graciously pleased to bestow upon When our blessed Saviour had fulfilled the law, and introduced a new and more perfect dispensation, the ceremonies which Moses had appointed were set aside; and instead of all the different sacrifices which had been required of the children of Israel, our LORD was pleased to ordain this testimony of our love and obedience; and we are told by St. Paul that as often as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we do shew the Lond's death till he come. This sacrament is appointed not only to keep up the remembrance of Christ in our minds, but that by it we may plead before God the merits of his death as the foundation of all our hopes of pardon and accept-

ance; and by it, when we perform this duty with Christian faith, we shall be made partakers of the benefits of that great sacrifice, which our Saviour offered for the sin of the world. 'The bread and the wine are appointed to represent to us the body and blood of CHRIST, and to communicate the benefit of his death to every faithful Christian. By partaking of this sacrament our souls are strengthened and refreshed as our bodies are by bread and wine. It is the appointed means of conveying to us pardon and grace. In this sacrament, more than in any other ceremony of our religion, we seem to be brought near to our gracious and reconciled GoD; we enter into his courts, we are admitted to his table, though unworthy even to gather up the crumbs that fall from thence. There we are allowed and commanded to hope and to pray for pardon, through the merits and for the sake of our crucified Saviour; and there we receive the assistance of his grace, which will guard us against sin, will support us in every trial, will guide our feet into the way of peace, and at last will lead us to heaven.

But if such be the nature of this blessed sacrament, let us enquire, secondly, what objections can be made against an institution so full

of comfort and advantage to all sincere Christians; and how it happens, that any of those who are called refuse to come to the supper of their Lord. It is not extraordinary that those who neither believe in Christ, nor obey his laws, should refuse to enter into his presence, and be afraid to approach his table. They may indeed be afraid even to think of his death, while by their sins they crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame. But I wish to address myself to those who sincerely believe the gospel, and hope for salvation only by the merits of CHRIST; but who yet neglect to perform this his last command. I believe it will generally be found, that this neglect is owing either to the want of a just sense of the importance of this duty, or to fears and scruples which are sometimes occasioned by a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians.

To those who stay away for want of sufficiently considering the importance of the duty, I must speak in the language of deserved reproof. I must ask, if any man who calls himself a Christian, can forget the last request of his dying Master; if he can presume to disobey his last command? Have you no gratitude to such a friend? Have you no love for him who died for you? Have

you no sins, for which you ought to ask forgiveness? Have you no need of grace to assist your feeble endeavours in the path of virtue? Whoever thou art, who dost presume to hope for salvation through Christ, and yet dost live in constant disobedience to his positive command, I charge thee to consider the danger of thy state. The command was given by Christ himself, and it was given to all. Who shall dare to disobey it?

To them who are afraid to approach the table of the Lord from an humble sense of their own infirmities, the Christian Minister would wish to speak the language of consolation; but in order to avoid mistakes on this important subject, I will endeavour to shew you who those are that receive the communion unworthily. St. Paul certainly does not mean to exclude any sincere Christian, who humbly endeavours to perform the will of Gop. Such a man may have many faults, he may fall into many errors; but this sacrament is the appointed means by which he may hope to receive the pardon of those faults, by which he may obtain grace to guard him against those errors. The sincere, the humble, the penitent Christian will not be rejected, when

he duly applies for these benefits at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Even the greatest sinner, if he truly repent, and determine, by the grace of God, to forsake his evil ways, may hope, through faith in the merits of Christ, to obtain mercy; for which he should plead at the table of the Lord.

But if any man indulge in the practice of any known sin; if he be not fully resolved to amend; if he bear any malice against his neighbour; if he lead a wicked life, and be not determined to change it;—I do not advise that man to come to the table of the Lorp; but I do advise and most earnestly entreat him to consider the danger of his state. To him I say, that if he be not fit to receive the Holy Sacrament, he is not fit to die. If he obstinately refuse to repent, and change his conduct, whether he does, or does not, approach the altar of God, still the gospel gives him no hope of salvation. Let such a man tremble at the wrath of GoD; let him tremble at the punishments prepared for obstinate sinners; let him instantly renounce and forsake all wickedness; let kim humbly entreat the pardon of GoD; let him stedfastly resolve to lead a new life; and then let him approach the throne

of grace, and plead for mercy at the altar of Gon, through the merits and mediation of Him who died to save sinners. Then, "though his sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."\*

Then he shall know that the Lord is gracious, long-suffering, and of great pity; that He spareth when we deserve punishment, and in his wrath thinketh on mercy.

I hope what I have now said is sufficient to persuade every sincere Christian that he has nothing to fear, while he humbly repents of his sins, and endeavours to amend his life; and that the judgments mentioned by St. Paul are only to be dreaded by those who continue in any known sin; or, in other words, that whatever should keep any man from the table of the Lord, must equally exclude him from heaven, if he die without repentance.

I proceed, thirdly, to point out the advantages of frequent communion. On this subject I may appeal to the hearts of all those, who constantly, and with true piety, attend this holy sacrament. They' know the comfort it affords in every situation of life. It is there the Christian

applies for relief, when he is ready to sink under the sense of his own weakness and imperfection. There he learns that, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father. Jesus CHRIST the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins."\* When he is in distress or affliction, there he hears the consoling voice of CHRIST, which calls to every child of sorrow, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."† When he feels the infirmities of age, and sees the near approach of death, there he is taught to look for support from Him who suffered and died for us all. Admitted to communion with Gop. allowed to enter into his presence, to eat at his table; he feels his faith strengthened, his hope confirmed, his charity enlarged. He returns to the duties of life with more ardour, he supports its sorrows with more resolution. Such are the blessings, such are the consolations, which our Saviour offered to all his faithful servants. when he left with them his last command, " Do this in remembrance of me."

It only remains to consider, in the last place, how we may best perform this sacred duty.

<sup>• 1</sup> John ii. 1.

"Let a man examine himself," says St. Paul; and our church informs us in what manner we ought to do this. We must look into the state of our hearts, and of our lives, and see whether we truly repent of our former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life; whether we have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and whether we are in charity with all men, "In this excellent summary of the appeal which we are to make to our own consciences, every thing is suggested which may contribute to give comfort and encouragement to the fearful and anxious mind, hesitating at the recollection of his own infirmities; and which may tend to check the confidence which would press unprepared into the sanctuary of GoD.

"Unsinning obedience is not, in this imperfect state, the lot of man; and the best of us must use, and the best of us will be most ready to use, the lowly prayer of the publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'\* He who hath declared that he came, 'not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance,' will not forbid the penitent to approach his table; nor is there any command-

<sup>\*</sup> Luke xviii. 13.

ment in scripture, which denies to those whose acknowledgment of their weakness and offences proves their conviction of the necessity of the atonement which has been made for them, the permission to turn unto their Saviour, and with hearty repentance, and true faith, to commemorate this atonement. If we have sincerely searched and tried our ways, not as dissemblers with Gop, and find in our hearts sorrow for our past offences, and stedfast resolutions of amendment. faith in God and in our Lord Jesus Christ, and charity towards our neighbour, ' forgiving their trespasses, and being ready to make restitution to the uttermost of our power for all injuries done by us to any other;'\* then we may trust that we are not unworthy, and may with humble hope look forward to the blessings which the mercy of Gop has annexed to this holy ordinance."+

This is the preparation required, and this will be easy to those who constantly practise the important duty of self-examination. The humble and pious Christian, who keeps a constant watch over his own heart, and never sleeps till he has endeavoured to obtain the pardon of his sins,

<sup>\*</sup> Communion Office.

<sup>†</sup> Sandford's Lectures on the Epistles in the Passion-Week.

should not refuse to attend the Lond's table. though he may not have much time for preparation. Every man may be, and at all times ought to be, in perfect charity with all mankind. Every man may find some time to pray to Gop for pardon, before he goes to the holy Communion; every man may attend the solemn service with reverence and devotion, with a lively faith in Christ, and a thankful remembrance of his death; and every man may find some time to return thanks for the blessings he has just received; and if these prayers and praises are offered from a sincere and humble heart, they will be accepted at the throne of grace. In every situation we must do the best we can. Those who have time, should spend it in reading and meditation. Those who have not the power of doing this, may at least offer up a short but fervent prayer for pardon, through the merits of that Saviour whose death they are to commemorate; and having done this, let them approach the altar of God, trusting in his manifold and great mercies.

Before I conclude this discourse, I wish to say a few words to prevent a very common, but very dangerous mistake. Many who have never received the sacrament during their lives, wish for it when they are dying; and seem to suppose it will then be effectual for their salvation. It is a sad and most painful task to the minister of the gospel, to attend the death-bed of the hardened sinner, who, having rejected every offer of mercy, trembles at approaching punishment. Then he wishes to apply for that mercy, which he has so often refused, and to plead the merits of that Saviour whom he had despised; while he indulges a vain hope, that this holy sacrament, which he always neglected to receive when he was in health, will still procure for him pardon and acceptance.

Alas! my brethren, the gospel offers no such hope; and what comfort can the minister of Christ afford to such a man? He can only exhort him to repent, and throw himself on the mercy of his God. He can only hope and pray that it may not yet be too late; but terrible is the state of such a person, and it is not merely the eeremony of receiving this holy sacrament which can afford him solid consolation.

But to the good man, as this blessed sacrament has been a support through life, so it will be a comfort in that trying hour when all human com-

fort fails. To him it will bring pardon and peace. It will enable him to support the pains of death, and open to his closing eyes the prospect of eternal glory. I have witnessed many such scenes. I know how faith and hope can sustain the dying Christian. It is then that religion triumphs. It is then that we feel all its worth. It is then that we know in whom we have trusted. Then thy faithful servant, O Gop! sees heaven opened; then he joins with Angels and Archangels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, to laud and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD of hosts! heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O LORD most High! Amen.

## SERMON VI.

ST. LUKE VI. 6.

And it came to pass also, on another sabbath, that he entered into the Synagogue.

T is required of every Christian that he should publicly, as well as privately, glorify God. It is not enough that he pray to Him in secret, though it is absolutely necessary to do so; but he must also let his light shine before men, and convince them that he thinks it his greatest glory to be the servant of Christ. This is to be done by constant attendance on the public service of the church, by religious observance of the Lord's day, and the appointed feasts and fasts; by never taking the name of God in vain, but always mentioning it with the greatest reverence; and by being ready on all proper occasions to testify

openly that he is a Christian. Our blessed Lord has left us an example of all these duties— We are told, that he not only prayed most earnestly in private, but that on the sabbath he went into the synagogue, which was the name given by the Jews to the place of public worship. We find him constant in his attendance there. He went up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast; and immediately before his death, he kept the passover with his disciples. In every word, and in every action, he might truly say to his heavenly Father, "I have glorified Thee on earth."\*

As the duties which I now recommend are attended with little difficulty, and much present satisfaction, it is strange that any exhortation to the performance of them can be necessary.

The great God of heaven allows us, his poor sinful creatures, formed of the dust, and soon to return to dust again, He allows us to enter into his courts, to assemble in his presence, to beg his assistance and protection, to hear his holy word, and to learn the way to everlasting happiness. He calls us to unite in the bonds of charity, and to ask, in the name of his blessed Son, what is necessary for ourselves, for our friends, for

our country, for all mankind. If we are happy, should we not wish to thank Him who giveth us all things richly to enjoy? If we are in affliction, should we not wish to ask his assistance and protection? And when He tells us that where two or three are gathered together, there He is in the midst, is it possible that any serious Christians should neglect the assembling of themselves together? In the church we are allowed to consider ourselves as in the immediate presence of God. Assembled in his house. kneeling at his altar, we confess our sins, and receive his promise of pardon; we sing his praise, we hear his word, we thank Him for all his goodness to us, we are taught our duty, and we receive his blessing. In the church we are all united in the bonds of Christian charity. There we are taught to forgive, as we hope to be forgiven. There all the little distinctions of this life are forgotten, and we learn to love each other as CHRIST has loved us. There the rich and the poor kneel together to implore that pardon of which all have need. There the rich and the poor look forward to that happiness for which all are taught to hope. There the sorrows of this short state of trial appear not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.

There we seem to have a nearer view of heaven; while we hear from the minister of Christ the consoling words of St. Paul—"Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."\* Surely every Christian will cry out with David, "My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord."† Surely every Christian will think that he never can be sufficiently thankful for the blessing which in this happy country is offered to all. Filled with love and gratitude to God, he will go into the house of the Lord, and worship.

The appointment of one day in seven for the performance of this duty seems to have been the first of all religious institutions; for we read in the second chapter of Genesis, that "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all his work, which God created and made;"‡ and as all the creatures of God are bound to thank him for their creation, so all mankind are bound to observe a sabbath-day. We have every reason to believe that there never was a time when good

<sup>\* 1</sup> Cor. ii. 9. + Psalm lxxxiv. 2. ; Gen. ii. 3.

men did not dedicate one day in seven to the duties of religion; and when God himself was pleased to command the observance of the seventh day from Mount Sinai, it is plain that He spake of a duty which was already known; for He says, "Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy." God would not have required men to remember what they had never been taught. In the Jewish church, the seventh day was observed, in memory of the deliverance out of Egypt; and since our LORD JESUS CHRIST arose from the dead on the first day of the week which we call Sunday, his disciples have constantly observed that day in memory of a greater deliverance wrought for all mankind, when their Saviour burst the bonds of death, and opened to them the kingdom of heaven.

To call your attention to the advantages we derive from this merciful appointment of God, I will consider the Lond's day, first, as a day of rest and comfort; and secondly, as a day of religious improvement; and I will conclude with some observations on the manner in which this sacred day should be spent by all Christians.

If we consider only our situation in this world, Sunday is a day of rest and comfort, and viewing

it in this light only, it must be regarded as a wise and merciful institution. Such is the impatience to get money, and such the cruelty of mankind. that thousands would be worn out with labour, if there were not an appointed day of rest; many condemned to work in the mines would never see the light of the sun; many would never know the comfort of cleanliness, of a few cheerful hours with their friends, or a walk in the fresh air, and would pass a miserable life of continual But now, whatever be the sufferings of the other six days, Sunday will bring some relief, wherever it is observed as it ought to be. All worldly cares being then laid aside, every man is at liberty to enjoy such pleasures as his situation affords. He is clean, he has time to see his family and friends; he breathes the fresh air of the country, which thousands can never do on any other day. He sees the beauties of nature, and the kind looks of a friend, and he feels himself free and happy. Even the poor beasts have reason to rejoice in the rest which that day affords, and by which they are prevented from sinking under constant and excessive labour.

But secondly, if we consider the LORD's day as the season of *religious improvement*, we shall know how much reason we have to bless Gop for it. Six days we may devote to worldly business; many of us indeed must do so, to provide the necessaries of life; but the seventh is the sabbath. On that blessed day we are permitted to lay aside all our cares; and we are taught to support all our sorrows, by fixing our thoughts on God, and the happiness which He has promised to all who love Him. On that blessed day we may worship Him in the assembly of his servants, we may read his holy word, and we may sanctify the innocent pleasures of life by uniting them with religion.

In order to make this sacred day more useful to us, allow me to make a few observations on the proper manner of spending it.

The fourth commandment tells us that we must do no manner of work; we must lay aside such employments as relate only to this world. The business of the farm, and the shop, must be suspended, as well as those public amusements which are too often made the business of the rich. Indeed I wish they were as attentive to their duty in this particular, as their poor neighbours; and that they would as constantly give up their journeys and their meetings for pleasure, as the shopkeeper does his gain, and the labourer his

work. But though many of the rich are much to be blamed in this particular, I am not at present addressing myself to them; and the poor are not always as obedient as they should be to the commands of God, in regard to this sacred day. Though a man does not open his shop, he may offend God, by taking that day tosettle his books. Though a woman does not spin, or work at her needle, yet if she neglect her duty, to follow any other employment, the fault is the same. It is the LORD's day, and to Him we must answer for the use we make of it.

How then, it may be asked, ought the poor man to spend his time on Sunday? I will endeavour to answer this question according to what we are taught in the Bible, and from the practice of the best and most pious Christians.

When a poor man rises in the morning on Sunday, let him endeavour to turn his thoughts from the business of other days, and fix them upon God. Let him gratefully acknowledge the blessing of a day of rest, and return his humble thanks to the Giver of all good gifts. Let him shew his respect for the day, by making himself as clean and as decent in his appearance as his circumstances will permit. Every man may be

clean in his person, and the very poorest, though only-clothed in rags, will still be welcome to the presence of his God, if in that, as in every thing else, he does the best he can. The public service of the church must be attended by every one who is not prevented by some duty which obliges him to stay away. A sick person must not be neglected by those whose duty it is to take care of him. A mother who has the charge of young children cannot leave them. Frequently the servants in a family cannot all go to church at the same time. These are lawful excuses; but let every one who is deprived of the happiness of serving God in the congregation, consider it as a misfortune, to be avoided if possible. Let every one who stays away, be sure that his reasons for so doing are such as he would not be ashamed to allege at the day of judgment. Families may be so ordered, that every one may go to church by turns; and if there be any service where this is not allowed, I should advise the servant of CHRIST to leave such a master, and to seek for one who fears Gop. It is impossible to point out every particular case; but if we really regard the service of GoD as our greatest happiness, if we love Him as we ought to do, and value the

blessings we enjoy in his house as they deserve, we shall not stay away if we can possibly help it. It is not a shower of rain, it is not a lazy wish to lie longer in bed, which will keep us from what we delight to do. They who are not in the habit of going to church, whose hearts are not right before God, those men know not the pleasures of religion; but, my brethren, I hope for better things from you. O taste and see how gracious the Lord is; blessed are all they who put their trust in Him.

When the service of the church is over, let the remainder of the day be spent in such a manner, as not to lose the advantages we have gained. It is a joyful and a happy day, it is a day to enjoy innocent pleasure; but let it be the pleasure of a Christian. Those who spend the other six days in hard work, confined perhaps to towns, or to un wholesome manufactories or mines, may with innocence, and with advantage to their bodies and minds, enjoy a walk into the country, breathe the fresh air, and gain health and strength to support the labours of the week. Those who live in the country, may enjoy the company and conversation of their friends; they may be cheerful and happy. But if the love of

Gop fill their hearts, they will do all to his glory. When they look at this beautiful world, they will bless him who made it. When they feel the comfort of virtuous friendship, they will thank him for that greatest of blessings. Whatever is perfectly innocent in itself, and does not interfere with the particular duties of the day, may be enjoyed with thankfulness. I hope it is not necessary to say that gaming and excessive drinking are never innocent; and on this sacred day, they must be regarded as doubly sinful. One employment which our Saviour seems to have delighted to perform on the sabbath-day, I earnestly recommend to all; and that is, doing good. This subject shall be particularly mentioned in a future discourse; and I will only observe at present, that the leisure which Sunday affords, can never be filled up more delightfully than in practising the lessons we have learnt at church, and in giving to others what Gop has given to us. If a poor sick neighbour cannot go to church, a kind friend may read the lessons or say a prayer to him at home; or may tell him the text, and what he can recollect of the sermon. If he is in affliction, a kind friend may share with him the religious consolation he has himself received. If he is in poverty, and that friend has neither silver nor gold to bestow, he perhaps may spare him a little of his Sunday's meal; or if not, he may at least speak comfort to his soul. He may tell him what he has just heard of Him who for our sakes became poor; who suffered more than ever man did; and who calls us to take up the cross, and follow him through the sorrows of this life to the everlasting happiness of the next. Those who have children, should spend some part of the day in teaching them their duty, and should gladly accept every assistance that is offered by the clergy, or by Sunday Schools. Those who have performed these duties to the best of their power, will sit down with double pleasure to their cheerful meal, and bless Gop for it with a joyful heart. If there be service in the afternoon, they will not need any exhortation to go there, for it will be their delight. In the evenings, I would recommend, what is practised in some places. that there should be a friendly society of those who fear GoD; who may meet together, in order that some one of them may read the Bible, or some good book to the rest; that those who cannot read themselves may have the comfort of

hearing the word of God, and spending the Evening like Christians.\* This will promote friendship, and unite good people to each other: they will enjoy cheerful and inflocent conversation, and learn to love each other, as Christ has loved them. Such, my Christian friends, should be the employment, such should be the pleasures, of the Lord's day. When you spend it thus, it will be unnecessary that I should remind you to thank GoD for such blessings before you sleep. Your evening song will be a song of thanksgiving. At peace with all the world, and with your heavenly Father, retire to rest; and rise refreshed, and ready to do your duty in that state of life to which God has called you. Then go forth to your six days labour, joyful, and glad of heart; hoping for the blessing of God on your honest industry, and looking forward to the return of this happy day, when we may again enter into the courts of the LORD, and meet in the house of God as friends. This happy day, which brings rest to the weary, instruction to the ignorant, and comfort to the

<sup>\*</sup> See the Bishop of Durham's Charge, in the year 1797, page 25.—See also a very interesting account of the Friendly Society at Winston, in the Reports of the Society for bettering the Condition of the Poor, vol. ii. p. 82.

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afflicted, this happy day, when every good man on earth is called to join with the angels in heaven, in singing, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Glory, and honour, and thanksgiving, and praise, be unto Him, for ever and ever. Amen.

## SERMON VII.

ST. LUKE XXII. 15.

And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer.

PROCEED now to consider the principal festivals and fasts which our church has appointed to be kept holy, and to point out the duties required of us on those sacred days. The example of our Lord, as well as the command of his apostles, and of their successors in the government of his church, binds us to perform these duties. We are told several times in the gospel, that our blessed Saviour kept the solemn feasts of the Jewish church; and it appears from the chapter of which my text is a part, that on

the same night that he was betrayed, he celebrated the great feast of the Passover with his disciples. The necessity of these duties is so generally allowed by all Christians, that I will not detain you longer on that subject, but proceed to explain the meaning of the chief festivals of our church, and the manner in which they ought to be observed.

The birth-day of Christ, commonly called Christmas-day, has been always observed by his disciples with gratitude and joy. His birth was the greatest blessing ever bestowed on mankind. The angels from Heaven celebrated it with a joyful hymn; and every man who has any feeling of his own lost state without a Redeemer, must rejoice and be glad in it. On this great day he will lay aside all worldly business, he will appear in the presence of God, and he will not fail to receive that holy sacrament, by which we partake of the benefits of our Redeemer's birth and death. He will rejoice from his heart, and call his neighbours and friends to rejoice with him. Christmas has been always considered as a season of joy, of friendship, of hospitality, of charity; as such it always ought to be considered. We should express our love and good-will to each

other; we should shew kindness to all who belong & CHRIST, for his sake. We should give of our bread to the hungry, and do every thing in our power to make our fellow-creatures happy. A few holidays are generally allowed to all men in honour of this blessed season; they may be spent in harmless pleasure, in innocent mirth and joy. A good man has the best right to be cheerful, for he only is at peace with God. Let him also be at peace with all mankind. At this holy season, particularly, we should banish all strife and contention. If any man have been injured, now is the time to forgive. If any man have done wrong, now is the time to own it, and to ask pardon. Our Saviour Christ came to us in great humility; and no degree of pride must accompany the devotion of a Christian. have done wrong, let us never be ashamed to own If we have been unkind to a friend, or even to an enemy, let us not hope to feel Christian joy till we acknowledge our error. Then, at peace with all men, and with our own conscience, let us be merry and joyful. This is the day which the LORD bath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it; "for unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and his name shall be called Wonderful,

Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."\*

But while we point out this blessed season as a time of joy to every servant of Christ, I grieve that, in any Christian congregation, it should be necessary to say, that it is not a time of intempe-No time, indeed, ought to be such; but it surely is strange and shocking, that this most holy season is sometimes disgraced by gaming, drunkenness, and every kind of vice. Is this a Christian's joy? Is this the return which our God expects, when He allows us to rest from our labours, and be happy? O my friends! consider the ingratitude, the dreadful wickedness of those who spend such a season as this in vice. Gaming is always madness and folly. It is trusting the comfort and happiness of our future lives to chance. It is perhaps ruining our families. losing all the fruit of years of honest industry. and reducing ourselves to beggary; or if it be successful, it inflicts the same misery on another. Who can enjoy money so gained? But these gains generally go to cheats and sharpers, who will render a dreadful account of them at the day of judgment. Those whom they have cheated

ere left to lament their folly and wickedness, perhaps to blaspheme their gracious God, and shock every pious ear by oaths and execrations. This vice, I hope, is not common; but there is another which is so to a dreadful degree. I speak of the odious crime of drunkenness. Gop made man in his own image; he gave him a body fearfully and wonderfully made, and a soul capable of reason and reflection. Unlike all other animals, man can think and reason; he can remember what is past, and look forward to what is to come. He knows and feels the dignity of his nature, and pays to his Creator free and reasonable service. Superior to all other creatures, formed to be the lord of the world. he is greater still as he is the heir of heaven, destined to live for ever, to be for ever happy. Such is man as his Creator formed him; and now consider for a moment what he makes himself by intemperance. Groveling on the ground, an object of disgust and detestation, his boasted reason gone, sunk far below the brutes that perish, he can no longer direct his own actions. may quarrel with his best friend, he may murder the wife of his bosom, and not know what he is doing. Does the world present a sight more

melancholy or more degrading? And when that man is called to answer for his crimes, will it be admitted as an excuse, that he had robbed himself of the reason which God had given him to direct his actions? Surely not. Though he has made himself a beast, he will be judged, he will be punished as a man. Let me entreat all who hear me, and particularly those who are entering into life, to consider this odious vice in its true light, and never to be guilty of it. When once it becomes a habit, repentance is difficult; yet the hour of repentance and amendment must come, or dreadful indeed will be the consequence, for we know that a drunkard cannot inherit eternal life; but if those who are as yet innocent in this respect, will seriously consider this odious vice, surely they will fly from it as from the face of a serpent. If they have a proper sense of religion, they will avoid any meetings which may lead them into temptation; and particularly at those holy seasons which are set apart for the service of God.

The forty days of Lent are appointed as a time of repentance and recollection, in order to prepare the Christian for the proper observance of the great festival of Easter. On the first day

Lent, which we call Ash-Wednesday, our church has appointed a very solemn and awful service. which all, who can do it, should not fail to attend. That service is intended as a merciful warning to those who do not sufficiently consider the dreadful judgment hanging over all impenitent sinners, which is there pronounced in the words of holy scripture; in order to lead those who have been guilty of the crimes which are there mentioned, to save themselves by repentance: and in order that those who are as yet guiltless of such crimes, may be the more afraid to offend. The holy season of Lent has been always considered as a time of self-examination and penitence, and every one should make it such, according to the circumstances of his situation.

All may practise some degree of self-denial, and all may find some time to think seriously of the state of their souls, to change what they find amiss in their general habits of life, and to make their peace with God by sincere repentance.

At the end of this holy season is the day on which we commemorate the death of our blessed Saviour, which is commonly called Good-Friday. This day cannot be observed too strictly. It is

a day of the deepest humiliation and sorrow for those sins which brought the son of God to the cross. We should not fail to attend the service of the church on that day; and neither business nor pleasure should prevent our reflecting seriously on that great event, and humbly entreating pardon from God, through the merits of the sacrifice which was then offered for the sin of the world. We should read with great attention the accounts given in the New Testament of our Saviour's suffering and death. We should consider what he has done for us; we should thank We should renounce him from our hearts. every sin, and devote ourselves entirely to his service. We should on that day retire from the world, to commune with our own hearts, and on our knees entreat forgiveness of our sins, through Jesus Christ. Thus shall we be prepared to celebrate the greatest of all days, in the eyes of a Christian; and through sorrow and humiliation, we shall be led from the cross of CHRIST to his triumphant resurrection.

On Easter-Sunday we celebrate our Saviour's victory over death and hell, when, having on the cross made an atonement for the sin of the world, he rose again from the grave, brought life and

immortality to light, and opened to all his faithful servants the way to heaven. All our hopes rest on this great event. "If CHRIST be not risen," says St. Paul, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Ye are yet in your sins.—But now is CHRIST risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that sleep."\* Death has now no sting; the grave has now no terror. We are assured that we shall rise again to meet our Lord, when he cometh with his holy angels. This greatest of feasts must be observed with true devotion. All Christian churches are open on this day, and the holy sacrament is every where offered to the true believer, who will not surely refuse to pay that tribute of gratitude and love to his glorified Redeemer. He will welcome this great day with Christian joy, for "the Lord is risen indeed."+

Forty days after his resurrection, our Lord ascended into heaven, in the sight of his disciples; which is celebrated by the church on Ascensionday, or holy Thursday; and ten days after his ascension, he sent the Holy Spirit to be their comforter and guide, which great blessing is commemorated on Whit-Sunday. This is a very

<sup>\* 1</sup> Cor. xv. 14. † Luke xxiv. 34.

great festival, and should be observed as such. The assistance of the Holy Spirit can alone support us through all temptations, and guide us into all truth. For this assistance we must continually pray, and we must celebrate this great day with reverence and devotion.

Many other days are appointed to be kept holy, in memory of the apostles and evangelists: and those who have an opportunity of attending the public service of the church on those days should gladly do it. But as many Christians cannot do this, I beg leave to recommend to them carefully to study the Companion to the Feasts and Fasts by Mr. Nelson. Few books contain so much Christian knowledge. In it instruction is mixed with entertainment, and much learning with true picty. Whoever is so happy as to be able to read and understand that book, possesses a treasure of divine knowledge and of true devotion.

Having now taken a general view of the public service of our church, let me beg you to consider what a blessing it is to us. In many countries men know not God, in many they do not worship Him as He has commanded; but in this happy land every Christian may have the blessing of

hearing God's word, and receiving his sacraments; he may join in prayer with a faithful congregation, and receive the instructions of a minister commissioned by Christ; and if he do this constantly and attentively, I will venture to say that the poorest man amongst us, though unable to read, and without the advantage of any other religious instruction, may gain more useful and important knowledge than the wisest man in the Heathen world ever possessed. Let him only attend to the Sunday lessons, and consider the great truths which he may learn from them. The Heathers knew not how the world was made; some thought it was formed by chance, and some that it existed from all eternity. But the first verse in the Bible removes all these doubts; "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." They knew not how sin and misery came into the world; but from the Bible we learn, that it was through envy of the Devil, who persuaded Adam to disobey God. The Heathens knew not whether there was one God only, or whether there were many, and they worshipped wood and stone. But from the Bible we learn, that the great Creator said, I am the LORD thy God, and thou shalt have none

other gods but me. They never heard of a Redeemer, and knew not how to obtain pardon for their sins; but the Bible tells us, that CHRIST Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The Heathens knew little of the will of God, or how they ought to act in order to please Him; but in the Bible we learn his will, and our duty to Him and to our neighbour. Lastly, the Heathens knew not what to expect after death, or whether they were ever to live again after leaving this world: but from the Bible we learn this most. important of all truths, that all men shall rise again with their bodies, and give an account of their own works; and the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."\*

Such are the treasures of divine knowledge, which are open to every Christian. Let us thankfully acknowledge such great blessings; but let us also remember that "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required."† No man amongst us can justly plead ignorance of the law of God, as an excuse for not obeying it: for every man may know what is necessary for the salvation of his soul, if he will only go to

<sup>\*</sup> Matth. xxv. 46.

church, and attend to what he hears there. To those who add to this the happiness of being able to read the Bible at home, I earnestly recommend the study of that sacred book, as the greatest advantage, and the greatest pleasure, they can enjoy. It will be the guide of their youth, and the comfort of their old age. They will every day find new beauties, as they become more acquainted with it. Their understandings will be enlightened, their hearts will be softened. All the blessings of redeeming love will be presented to their view, all the glories of heaven will be open to their hopes. The joys and sorrows of this world will seem as nothing; they will learn to scorn its pleasures, and despise its temptations, while they press forward to the mark, with their eyes fixed on the glory which shall be revealed. And when they have finished their course with joy, they will resign their souls in peace to Him who made, and who redeemed them; who will support them through the pains of death, and receive them into everlasting glory. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, by us, and by all created beings, now and for ever. Amen.

## SERMON VIII.

ST. JOHN XVII. 4.

I have glorified Thee on earth.

we learn to glorify God, by our thoughts, by our words, and by our actions. I have endeavoured to shew you how we should imitate his piety, his fervent prayer, his constant attendance on all the appointed duties of religion; and we must humbly endeavour to follow his example in the reverence which he expressed for his Heavenly Father by every part of his conduct here on earth. I will mention some particulars which make a part of what is called our duty towards God, before I proceed to shew you how we ought to glorify Him by performing our duty towards our neighbour in the manner which He has commanded.

In the first place, we should glorify GoD by never taking his name in vain; and I do not know a surer sign of truc piety, than constant attention to this duty. The man who has a true reverence for GoD, dares not profane his holy name. He will hold in abhorrence the shocking vice of swearing, that disgrace to a Christian country, by which men commit a dreadful crime against GoD, without even the temptation by which they try to excuse other crimes.

A truly pious man can never be guilty of this vice; for the fear of Gop is always before his eyes, and the love of Gop in his heart. He looks up with reverence to the great Creator of Heaven and earth, to whom all hearts are open, who hears the most secret word, and will call him to answer for it before men and angels. Though he fear not them who kill the body, he fears (and every human being ought to fear) the torments reserved for the wicked after death. But the good man is not restrained only by the fear of punishment, he is influenced by the love as well as the fear of Gop. Can such a man wantonly offend his kind and gracious Master? will he blaspheme that sacred name which he adores? Certainly not. When he mentions

the name of God, it is to bless and praise it; to tell how gracious the Lord has been to him. Will a man, who knows the terrors of the ALMIGHTY, who believes that He will assuredly punish those who despise his mercy, will he dare to call for damnation on his fellow creatures? Will his heart be capable of forming the dreadful wish, that the man who has offended him, may really suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, that he may really dwell with everlasting burnings. where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched? Think of this, I entreat you; and tell me, whether any heart, however wicked, is capable of wishing this? Yet such is the impious language which we continually hear amongst men who call themselves Christians: such is the inhuman wish pronounced against a man like ourselves, nay sometimes even against the poor harmless animal which Gop has given to assist us in our labour, against the horse, worn out with work, or terrified with blows. The barbarous treatment of animals is a subject which deserves very serious consideration; but at present I am only endeavouring to point out to you the meaning of words which are often used by thoughtless men, who never consider what they have dared to utter, or they would fear that these horrible curses might fall on their own heads.

Secondly, we should glorify GoD in our common conversation. It is not enough that we do not take his rame in vain by mentioning it without due reverence, but we must be careful that our conversation be such as becometh Christ-Let us not suppose that we are only to serve God on Sundays, and not to think of Him during the rest of the week. The true Christian is always engaged in the service of God. He takes every opportunity to shew his zeal for his Master's honour. He tries to lead others, and particularly those who are younger than himself, to think upon God. One of the greatest pleasures which good men can enjoy, is speaking to each other on the subject which is most interesting to them. They will never be ashamed to own that they fear GoD; on the contrary, it will be their glory that they are Christians; and much good might be done, even during the common employments of life, if they always spoke and acted in that character; if their conversation were such as becometh godliness.

Thirdly, we should glorify God by praising Him for our daily food. We are told that our Saviour gave thanks before he began to eat; and every Christian ought to do the same. To the bounty of God we owe every blessing; and while we enjoy the gift, let us not forget the Giver. Every enjoyment for which we have offered our humble thanks to God, will be doubly sweet. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."\*

Lastly, we should glorify God by our thoughts. Every thought which arises in our hearts is known to Goo, though concealed from all the world. This should make us guard our hearts with the greatest care. It is, indeed, impossible that our thoughts should be always employed on religion. Our gracious Master does not require this, but He does require us carefully to guard against those which are wicked; and He commands us frequently to make Him the object of our meditations. Wicked thoughts too often lead to wicked actions; and the man who can find pleasure in thinking of gratifying his malice, or indulging his lust or intemperance, is in great danger of committing such crimes. The man who allows himself to wish for what does not belong to him, is in great danger of

using dishonest means to obtain it. For this reason it is, that God, who knows our weakness. has not only told us not to steal, but to prevent our wishing to do so, He commands us not to covet or desire our neighbour's goods. For this reason our blessed Saviour tells us. "that he who looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."\* For this reason, he guards us against even a thought of revenge, by telling us to love our enemies, and to pray for those who persecute us. Wicked thoughts are the temptations of the Devil, and we must constantly endeavour to resist and drive them away; which may be most effectually done by turning our thoughts towards Gop. The poor man, whose daily labour is necessary to gain his daily bread, has not much time to spend in reading, or in making long prayers; though every man, who serves God as he ought, will find a few minutes night and morning to kneel down before Him, to beg his pardon and his blessing. But the poorest man. whilst engaged in the hardest labour, may sometimes think upon God, and find his greatest comfort in doing so. He may thank him for blessing with increase the labour of his hands;

for the health which enables him to maintain himself and his family; for having placed him in this happy country, where every man may eat the fruits of his honest industry in peace and liberty. He may thank Gon that he is not a slave, as many are in other countries, and forced to work under the lash of a cruel master. Above all, he should thank Him for the glorious prospect of happiness in the next world, which supports us through all the sorrows of this. When he returns at night, he may still think upon God. He may thank Him for the blessings of food and rest, sweetened, as they ought to be, by the duty and affection of his wife and children. Even if his situation in this life be still more unhappy, his thoughts may fly to heaven, and dwell on the glory which shall be revealed. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest!"\* There the faithful servant of God will be for ever happy,

Having now endeavoured to point out to you the principal duties of a Christian towards God, let me beg you to consider the happiness, which, even in this world, attends the performance of them. This will be seen by considering the

difference between a good and a bad man, in the day of prosperity, and in the day of adversity. It is certainly true that this world is a state of trial to all; and the best men must not expect to escape those sufferings which our heavenly Father sends to purify our minds, and to make us more worthy of his love. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."\* This is the lot of all; high and low, rich and poor, from the king on his throne to the captive in the dungeon, all know and feel it.

But if there are many sorrows in life, there are also many pleasures; and what we have to consider is, whether the good or the bad man be more likely to enjoy those pleasures, and support those sorrows, which are sent to both alike. Allow me however to observe to you, that in the common course of things it is probable the good man will be more prosperous, even in this world, than the bad man; for in most cases misery is the natural consequence of vice. A man who spends his time and his money in idleness, gaming, or drinking, will probably be poor. He will suffer want, he will be in debt, and perhaps end his days in a prison. A man who spends his youth

<sup>\*</sup> Acts xiv. 22.

in debauchery, will probably pass the rest of his life in pain and sickness. A man who is guilty of dishonest actions, will be despised and shunned; he will lose his character, and perhaps fall under the punishment of the law. These are the common and natural consequences of great vices; and certainly the man who suffers in any of these ways, cannot be so happy as he whose industry procures him an honest independence, whose health is secured by temperance and sobriety, and whose conduct entitles him to respect and esteem from all good men; thus "godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come."\*

But there may be a great difference between a good and a bad man, as I have already observed, even when the latter is not guilty of such gross vices as these. I will therefore take up the argument on the least favourable ground, and suppose a man who is guilty of no vices which are known to the world; who is sober for the sake of his health, and honest because he is afraid of the laws of his country; whose character stands fair, and who possesses all the prosperity which can be enjoyed in the world. All this may certainly

happen to a man who neither fears nor loves God; for "He maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." It must however be evident that a good man might be in the same happy circumstances as to outward things; and then the question is, which of these men will have most enjoyment of prosperity? I am at present considering only what each will feel while he lives in this world; and I say, that if they are in exactly the same situation, still there are two circumstances which will make the good man beyond comparison the happier.

First, the man who is without God in the world, is tormented by the fear of losing the blessings he enjoys. We all know that this may happen with regard to every earthly blessing; we know that it often does happen; and he who thinks that he owes his prosperity to chance, has always reason to fear that chance may take it away. The good man, on the contrary, puts himself and all that he possesses under the care of an all-powerful Protector. He knows that from God he received every good gift, and he knows that the blessings he enjoys never can be

taken away, except by the permission of Him who gave them; and that if God permit him to be deprived of them, it is because it is more for his real advantage. To God he looks up with gratitude for all he enjoys; to God he is ready cheerfully to resign every blessing He has given. He therefore possesses a degree of tranquillity which no bad man ever felt.

Secondly; if the bad man should even persuade himself that he has nothing to fear after death, still every man knows that he must die. In a very few years this must happen; it may be in a very few hours; and the more a an is attached to the good things of this life, the greater is his dread of losing all by death. But the good man knows that death is the gate of life, and the road to happiness far superior to any he could e j y here below. Thus we find, that in the ost prosperous state, the bad man must e tormented with fear and anxiety, while the good man is tranquil, composed, and happy.

But as prosperity comes alike to all, so does adversity. Each of these men may be placed by Providence in want, in sickness, in pain, or in sorrow. Which of them will then find most comfort under his affliction? Every heart can

answer this question, for it admits of no doubt. While the one trembles under the avenging wrath of an angry GoD, the other acknowledges the kind severity of a tender parent. The first has no comfort, no support, for he has neither trust in God, nor hope of heaven. The other knows that his light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work for him an eternal weight of Humbled under the mighty hand of God, he suffers indeed, but he is patient and resigned. He feels the loss of what was dear to him, but he knows that it is not lost for ever. His sufferings only increase his diligence. knows they were sent for his real good, and from his heart he thanks God for them. Pain may be hard to bear, the loss of a dear friend may force his tears to flow; but through every trial, every affliction, he will still know and feel, that even in this world there is a reward for the righteous; that even in this world the good man enjoys that peace, which the wicked can never know.

But it may perhaps be said, that there are cases in which the advantage as to worldly prosperity is on the side of the bad man, and when he who will not disobey GoD, must sacrifice what wicked men enjoy. It cannot be denied that this may often happen. A wicked man may obtain riches by means which a virtuous man cannot practise: and still he may not be liable to punishment from the laws of his country. To set the answer to this objection in the clearest light, I will suppose the bad man raised to the highest degree of prosperity, and the good man sunk to the lowest point of affliction and distress; and still I say that this last is the happier man. To prove this, it is only necessary to observe that the one lives and dies in fear, and that the other lives and dies in hope;-fear which will poison every enjoyment;-hope which will sweeten every sorrow. The one is conscious of guilt, and lives in fear of punishment; the other has reason to trust in the mercy of God, and lives in hope of an everlasting reward.

And now let me ask of every one who hears me, which of these is the happier man? I hope no Christian can be in doubt what answer to give.

These are the advantages, these are the triumphs, of Christianity; and blessed are they who make it the rule of their lives. In prosperity and adversity, in youth and age, in health and sickness, in life and death, they will enjoy that peace which this world cannot give, that peace which only good men can experience, and which passeth all understanding.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, adoration and praise, now and for evermore. Amen.

### SERMON IX.

## ST. LUKE ii. 51, 52.

And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them; but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

AVING endeavoured to explain our duty to God, I proceed to consider what He has commanded us in regard to our fellow-creatures; for the foundation of every duty, of every kind, is the command of God. Our reverence for the great Creator is to accompany us in every action of life. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" is the Christian's enquiry, on every occasion; and he looks for the answer to it in his Bible. His duty to his neighbour is a

part of his duty to God. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."\* It is not enough that a man loves his relations and friends for his own sake, and because they contribute to his happiness; it is not enough that he does good merely to relieve himself from the pain of beholding misery; he can then only be said to perform these duties as a Christian, when a constant wish of pleasing God, and attention to his commands, is the ruling principle of every action. Dear as his wife and children are to him. the Christian would lose them all rather than disobev Gop. He would see them suffer any degree of misery, rather than attempt to relieve it by a dishonest or wicked action. Thus, in every circumstance of his life, in every affection of his heart, his God must be his ruler and guide; and every duty which we are now to consider, is still to be regarded as a part of our duty towards Him.

<sup>\*</sup> Matt. xxii. 37.

I will now endeavour to point out the principal duties which God has commanded us to perform to our fellow-creatures; presenting to you the perfect example of Jesus Christ in every circumstance in which it is possible for us to imitate his conduct, and adding some observations on such duties as did not belong to the character in which he was pleased to appear in this world, and therefore are to be learnt from the doctrines, rather than from the example, of our divine Master.

The first duty which we are called to perform in this state of trial, is that which we owe to our parents; and of this our Saviour has left us an illustrious example. We learn, from my text. that Jesus went down with his parents to Nazareth, that he was subject to them, and that under their tender care he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with GoD and with man. Such is the beautiful picture which is left us in the gospel, of the childhood of Christ; and short as it is, we find in it all that is necessary for our instruction. The first duty of a child is obedience; and we are told that even the eternal Son of God practised this duty; he was subject to his parents. Man, when he comes into the world, is more weak and helpless than any other

animal; he depends on his parents for every thing; and if through life he can ever forget what he owes to their care and kindness, he may iustly be considered as a monster of ingratitude. . Most other animals can provide for themselves, but man must perish immediately, without assistance. Many years must pass before his reason will be strong enough to direct him even as to the care of his body; and it is only by observing the directions of those who are older and wiser than himself, that his health or even his life can be preserved. We must first learn obedience to those who are to instruct us, or we shall never learn any thing else. In the practice of this duty, we are told that Jesus increased in wisdom, as well as in stature; he set an example of dutiful attention to his parents, and he was pleased to learn wisdom, as every other man learns it, by listening to those who were appointed to instruct him. Thus we find him in the temple, at twelve years of age, amongst the Doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. They were astonished at his understanding and answers; yet we still find him setting an example to youth, of attention, humility, and that disposition to learn, without which none will ever increase in

wisdom. The Evangelist adds, that Jesus also increased in favour with Gop and with man. From this it is evident, not only that he was obedient, but also that he gained the love of his parents and friends, which can only be done by loving them, by constantly endeavouring to make them happy, by modesty, gentleness, and every other virtue that a child can perform. Such were the early virtues which were seen in the holy child Jesus. But we learn from St. John's gospel, that he did not think the duties of a son were to end with childhood; for in the last dreadful moments of his life, when he hung bleeding on the cross, in agonies such as no other man ever felt, we find him still tenderly attentive to his aged mother, and committing her as a sacred trust to the care of his beloved disciple. "Then saith he to the disciple, behold thy mother; and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."\*

From this affecting story we may learn, that no circumstances, however dreadful, should make a man neglect the care of his parents. If he fail in that duty, I fear he is very unlikely to perform any other.

Such is the lesson which all young persons may learn from the example of Christ, and it is confirmed by the directions left us on the same subject by the great apostle St. Paul, in several of his epistles. "Children, obey your parents in the LORD, for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on earth."\* And again, "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the LORD."† This sacred duty cannot be too strongly impressed on the minds of all children. God has committed them to the care and government of their parents, who are answerable for the performance of that trust, and are ordered to instruct them, to prevent their doing what is wrong, and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. To make this an easy and pleasing task, the child should pay a willing obedience to the commands of his father and mother. He should feel and know that he is weak and ignorant, and should thank GoD for having given him guides to direct his steps. He should tenderly love his parents. He should always

<sup>\*</sup> Ephes. vi. 1. ... † Col. iii. 20.

remember his obligations to them.—He should attentively listen to their instructions, and diligently obey all their commands; and thus, by willing and dutiful obedience, he should spare them the painful task of forcing him to do what his duty requires. This they must do, if he will not obey them willingly, for God has commanded it: and they are answerable to Him, if their child contract habits of lying, stealing, obstinacy, or any other fault which might have been prevented by their authority. Let every child consider this; and if he has any love or gratitude to his father and mother, any regard to his own interest. or any sense of duty to God, let him willingly submit to those who have the rule over him; and endeavour to act so, that they may never be obliged to govern him by any methods but those of gentleness and love. And if a child be so unfortunate as to have an unkind parent, or if he be under the power of a severe master, let him never forget his duty to God, which obliges him always to submit with meekness. Whatever may be the faults of the parent, or of those who act by his authority, they cannot alter the duty of the child. He must take his sufferings patiently, he must constantly endeavour to please, by obe-

dience and dutiful submission; and if he still be treated with unkindness, he must consider his sufferings as appointed by God, who frequently, at some part or other of our lives, corrects our faults by affliction and pain; but will reward those who bear their sufferings like Christians with an eternal weight of glory. Let him pray to God to direct him in the duty he is to perform, and to grant him patience under every trial; and let him look forward to the time, when, either in this world or the next, he will be comforted. Never let him forget the reverence which every child owes even to the worst of parents; let him still honour and respect them, let him try to gain their love, and let him pray to God to bless I have been speaking of a case which seldom happens. The affection of parents to their children is so strong, that if they meet with a proper return of duty and obedience, they are not often unkind. But in this, as in every thing, let each one consider his own duty, and perform it; and the duty of a child is so plain that it cannot be mistaken. He is to love, honour, and succour his father and mother, and cheerfully to obey all their commands, for the Lord's sake.

When the young man, having increased in wisdom and stature, becomes capable of providing for himself, let me advise him to guard carefully against any wish to be free from the authority of his parents. We have a most affecting instance of the ill consequence of that wish, in the beautiful parable of the prodigal son, which you may read in the 15th chapter of St. Luke. Tired of the restraints of a regular family, and the gentle controul of his affectionate father, the young man would be his own master. Trusting to his own judgment, he fell into bad company, vice, and poverty. He spent his substance in riotous living; and when the season of wicked pleasure was over, he was reduced to such a state of wretchedness, "that he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him." Then, and not till then, he was sensible of his error, and did all that could be done to repair it. He went to his father, and humbly confessed his fault, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Let every young person learn from this story the danger of the first step out of the narrow

path of duty. When the prodigal left his father. he little thought that he should so soon be plunged in sin and misery; but he was led on step by step, till he was on the brink of destruction, and could only be saved by the bitter tears of repentance. Happily for him, his father yet lived to receive and to forgive him. What must have been the state of the wretched son, had it been otherwise? O ye, who are as yet innocent of great crimes, who as yet are under the protection of tender parents, and can receive the benefit of their advice and example, cherish it as the greatest of blessings! Consider such parents as your best friends: assist, support, and comfort them; try to deserve their love and esteem, and then you may hope that their blessing will obtain the blessing of God. In almost every instance thev are the best and truest friends that a man will ever find in this world; and if they are pious and virtuous, he should always wish to be guided by their advice, and should pay the most respectful attention to their wishes. He can seldom, at any age, be justified in disobeying their commands, unless those commands are contrary to the laws of God or his country. He should consider it

as a great blessing, if his parents are spared till he is in full strength, that he may have the means of proving his gratitude and love by devoting a portion of his labour to their support, if their wants require it; and in every situation of life, by constant and affectionate care and attention when they are old. Age, as well as infancy, must be assisted, for it is subject to many infirmities. Happy is the man who shews, by his tender care of his parents in their old age, that he has not forgotten what they did for him in his youth. Happy is the man, who thus deserves and obtains the blessing of his dying parents, and after he has lost these his best friends, may reflect on his conduct towards them with satisfaction.—Such a man will indeed always feel that the loss of a parent is never to be supplied to a dutiful and affectionate child; and in a world where true friends are not often found. he will perhaps drop many a tender tear over the grave of his father, long after he has committed his body to the earth; but the consciousness of having always endeavoured to perform his duty to him will be his greatest comfort. He will recollect what he learnt from his parents in his youth; he will think of all their kindness

and tender attention to his happiness in this world and the next; he will imitate their example, and endeavour to honour their memory by practising ail the virtues which they taught him. But dreadful must be the feelings of him, who knows that he has added to the usual sufferings of age, by the want of that duty and affection which his parents had a right to expect from him. Dreadful must be the state of his mind, when his conscience tells him that he has done so, after those parents are removed from this world, when he knows that he can never make them amends for his faults, never regain their love, never obtain their pardon and their blessing.

Consider what has been said, all ye whose parents yet live. Reverence the grey hairs of your father, and forsake not your mother when she is old. Bear with all their infirmities of body and mind, and have patience with them, if their understanding fail. Support them in poverty, watch over them in sickness, and let your tender care cheer the gloom of declining years, and smooth the bed of death. And may the blessing of God reward you, in the duty and affection of your own children; may

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you live long in the land which He hath given you; and may He, who often in this world punishes the vices of the father upon the children to the third or fourth generation, may He make the blessing of your parents to rest on you and on your children, and shew mercy to thousands in them who love Him, and keep his commandments. To Him be glory now and for ever. Amen.

## SERMON X

#### HEBREWS iv. 15.

But was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

E are told in three of the Gospels, that after our Saviour was baptized, and before he began his ministry, he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. It is not perhaps possible for us fully to understand the nature of that temptation; but I will lay before you what I apprehend we may learn from the account which is given us of it, and then proceed to consider how far it is in our power to imitate the bright example of our Lord and Master.

We know from the Bible that the evil spirit, called the Devil and Satan, has been from the beginning the enemy of mankind. We know that

he tempted our first parents, that they yielded to the temptation, and by so doing lost the favour of Gop, and the happiness of Paradise, and became subject to sin and death. We are told that this enemy of God and man still goes about seeking whom he may devour, and that the servant of God must resist him, and not yield to the temptations which he offers to draw him from his duty. Some men resist with more constancy than others; but such is the weakness of our nature, that it never can be said of any man that he is without sin. "If we say we have no sin. we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."\* But those temptations to which Adam and all his sons have yielded, were presented in vain to Jesus Christ. He resisted every art of the deceiver; and having been in all things tempted like as we are, he was still without sin. During the whole of his life he was perfectly innocent; and though it is impossible for us to be like him in that respect, yet we must constantly set his bright example before our eyes, and come as near it as we possibly can. We must imitate his spotless purity, and freedom from every kind of vice; his humility, his charity,

his resignation to the will of God. In youth and in age, in life and in death, we must still look unto Jesus, the pattern of every virtue, as well as the sacrifice for sin; the Creator, the Redcemer, and the Judge of the world.

Having already considered the situation in which we are first placed in this world, when our actions are under the controul and government of our parents, and when obedience to them is our principal duty; I proceed to the period when a man begins to act for himself, and to be his own master. To this period children often look forward with impatience, as the beginning of their enjoyment of life, as the time of liberty and of happiness. Alas, my brethren, how soon do we learn that this is a mistake! Happy is it for those who know this from the experience of others, before they learn it to their ruin from their own. Let me entreat those who are yet young, and free from great crimes, to listen with attention, whilst I speak to them the language of experience and truth.

Let it not be supposed that I wish to check the innocent cheerfulness of youth, or to discourage hope, by representing the world as a state of continual disappointment and sorrow. I am far

from considering it as such. God has given us many comforts, many pleasures; and I only wish to secure these blessings, by teaching the young man to enjoy them like a Christian. At our entrance into life, we commonly possess many very great advantages, and Providence allows us to enjoy them. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth."\* It is the season of health and vigour of body. The spirits have not been broken by affliction, and the heart beats high with hope. All the pleasures of life have the charm of novelty, and we pursue them with eagerness. Impatient for liberty, and often feeling much confidence in our powers of body and mind, nothing seems too hard for us. Rejoice, O young man; but do not forget "that for all these things," if indulged beyond their due limits, "God will bring thee into judgment." If youth be the season of pleasure, it is also the season of danger. Many are the temptations to which it exposes every man; and from those temptations no man will escape, who is not guarded by firm principles of religion. To this point, my young friends, the Christian

<sup>\*</sup> Eccles, xi. 9.

preacher would wish to call your attention. Rejoice in the blessings which God has given you; but never lose sight of this great truth. that our chief business in this world is to make ourselves fit for heaven. The pleasures of this life may be enjoyed, as far as can be done with innocence; but they must never be the principal object of our pursuit. Perfect liberty, and perfect happiness, are not allowed to man in this state of trial. Though we are no longer restrained by the authority of our parents, we must be for ever restrained by the authority of GoD. Though happiness be the object of all our wishes, it is not placed within our reach in this world. The door of Paradise is shut. The angel with the flaming sword guards the way of the tree of life. It can only be found by the narrow path of virtue; and opened to us by Him, who is the way, and the truth, and the life. Listen to the great Captain of our salvation; "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me." "Ye must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of GoD." "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."\* On

<sup>\*</sup> John xvi. 33.

this last great truth rests the Christian's joy. He views the world as the appointed path to eternal glory. He expects to find in that path many thorns as well as flowers. He knows that it is filled with temptations which he must firmly resist, as well as with pleasures which he may innocently enjoy; but he knows that CHRIST has overcome the world. Strong in his strength, he enters into life with calm and rational satisfaction, prepared to meet with many pleasures and many sorrows; but as both will soon be over, his attention is chiefly fixed on a better country. He knows not whether he shall be prosperous or unfortunate during his passage through the world, but he knows that in both situations he shall be exposed to temptations; and the wish of his heart, the object of his hope, the business of his life, is to resist them. is firm unto death, in hopes that Gop will give him a crown of life. For this he does not trust in his own strength, but in the grace and assistance of Him who was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin; who, having himself overcome the world, despised its pleasures, and resisted its temptations, has left us an example that we should follow his steps.

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But as different situations expose us to different dangers, it may perhaps be of use to make a few observations on the temptations to which young persons are commonly exposed, when they first enter into the world, and are allowed to think and act for themselves.

First, then, let me guard the young managainst temptations from within, and entreat him to beware of vanity and presumption. These are very common faults in youth, and they often choak the seeds of every virtue. Experience will convince him of his error, but he may be ruined before he has learnt the sad lessons which are taught in that school. Let him not trust to his own strength, but with the modesty which is so becoming in youth, and with the humility of a Christian, let him listen to the advice of his friends, and the commands of his Gop. Let him pray for grace to overcome all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and not suppose that his own strength and wisdom is sufficient to do this. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."\*\*

Secondly, let him guard against temptations from without, and avoid bad company. This is,

perhaps, the most dangerous of all temptation. For one man who is led astray by love of vice, thousands are ruined by the seductions of others. The pleasure of entertaining conversation, the fear of being laughed at, the dangerous arguments by which wicked men try to shake the religious principles of those whom they wish to ruin, and that great enemy of weak minds, bad example; these are the snares which are often fatal to inexperienced youth. Let the servant of God guard his heart against them. Let him avoid every place where he will hear religion made the subject of ridicule. Let him avoid the unbeliever, the drunkard, the gamester, the libertine. Let him be very careful in the choice of friends, and never seek the company of any but good men. With them he may be cheerful without danger, and happy with a safe conscience.

Thirdly, let him guard against the temptation of idleness. No man is so unlikely to fall into mischief, as he who is employed in honest industry. In this respect the poor are far happier than the rich; and to this, perhaps, it is owing that they escape many vices. When a man has nothing to do, he is almost always tempted to do wrong. Let every young person shun idleness.

Every man, and every woman, may find some useful employment; and every hour which is spent in doing nothing, should be considered as a misfortune, a disgrace, and a temptation to sin.

Lastly, let him guard against the temptations of vice. When I exhort a well-educated and virtuous youth, to avoid drunkenness, gaming, adultery, murder; he will perhaps answer, as Hazael did to the prophet, "What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?"\* grant that he may always hear of these vices with the same honest indignation; but in order to this, he must not presume too much on his own strength, and he must carefully avoid all the temptations I have already mentioned; or he may be led on, step by step, till he loses his principles, his character, his innocence, and his happiness. He may be led on, till only the bitter tears of repentance can preserve his soul, as well as his body, from ruin. I have already cautioned you against some of these enemies of our souls, and others shall be noticed hereafter.

At present I will only mention one amongst the dangers which surround the mexperienced youth, and entreat him to avoid the society of

<sup>• 2</sup> Kings viii. 13.

bad women. Virtue is never so lovely, or vice so odious, as in a woman. Let the young man attend to what is said on this subject in the Bible. "The lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on Hell. Remove thy way from her, come not night he door of her house."\*

" A virtuous woman," says the same inspired writer, "is a crown to her husband;t" and happy is the man who is united to such a one by the sacred bond of marriage; "but whoremongers and adulterers," says St. Paul, "God will judge." Before I conclude this subject, let me warn every one who hears me, against the dreadful guilt of corrupting an innocent woman to her ruin. However men may regard this crime, I scruple not to say, that, when all its dreadful consequences are considered, the murderer is far less guilty than the seducer. They who kill the body, have no more that they can do; but may every young woman look with horror on the wretch, who, under the pretence of love, would rob her of her virtue, of the

<sup>\*</sup> Prov. v. 3. † Prov. xii. 4. † Heb. xiii. 4.

esteem of her friends, of her character in this world, and perhaps of her eternal happiness in the next. And shall not God be avenged for such crimes? Think not that the number of criminals will be any excuse in his sight. I know that such men are not always detested as they ought to be. I know that they are often found in all societies, and even in the religious assemblies of Christians. If there be such a man in this congregation, to him I speak: let him listen to the voice of truth. If thy wicked heart intend to seduce an innocent woman, and to take advantage of her love for thee to ruin her in this world and the next; I charge thee to consider the sin which thou art about to commit, and to tremble at the vengcance of an offended God. The hour of repentance must come, God grant that it may be now. God grant that the preacher may touch thee to the soul, while he calls thee to answer for thy crime at the judgment seat of Christ. There we must all appear; and how wilt thou then reply to the parents of the woman thou hast seduced, when they thus charge thee in the presence of her Redeemer? "This child was the object of our fondest love, we reared her with the

tenderest care, we taught her all we knew, we set her a good example, we brought her up in the fear of God. She was innocent and happy; and we hoped that our declining years would be blest by her growing virtues; but that man, that man whom she loved, who pretended to love her, seduced her from the path of virtue, plunged her in guilt, in shame, in ruin. At his hands we demand our child."

But this is not all. Shouldst thou then see that woman, who was ruined by thee, banished from heaven for thy sake, consider for a moment what thou wilt then feel? Could thy agony be greater, if all her sins and thy own should fall with tenfold vengeance on thy guilty head? This is not a fable; it is, it will be true. In vain may a wicked world excuse such crimes, in vain may many partners in guilt persuade thee not to reflect on the day of vengeance. The hour will come, it must be soon, it may be now, when thou shalt know and feel all the horrors of this blackest of crimes. O consider this, ye that forget God; repent, and beg for mercy, before it be too late!

To those who are not yet polluted with such crimes, allow me to repeat, in a few words, the

advice which has been offered, in order that it may make a more lasting impression on the memory. Once more then, my young friends, let me entreat you to consider the world as a state of trial, and youth as a time of danger. Let me beg you to guard against the temptations of vanity and presumption, of bad company, of idleness, and of vice. Above all, let me entreat you to "remember your creator in the days of your youth;" and to study, and endeavour to imitate, the bright example of perfect purity and freedom from every kind of vice, which was presented to the world by Him, "who was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

To Him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory, now and for ever. Amen.

<sup>\*</sup> Eccles. xii. 1.

# SERMON XI.

#### ST. MATTHEW XIX. 5, 6.

For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

PROPOSE in this discourse to consider the duties of married persons, to each other, and to their children, according to what we learn on these subjects from the Holy Scriptures.

In these particular situations of life, we cannot gain instruction from the example of our Saviour, as he did not appear to us in the character of a husband or a father; but in the words of my text he expresses, in the strongest manner possible, his approbation of the sacred engagement of

marriage; and his apostles particularly explain the duties which belong to it. St. Paul says, "Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands. as unto the LORD. Husbands love your wives. even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."\* St. Peter, who was himself a married man, directs the wife to be in subjection to the husband, and the husband to dwell with the wife, giving honour to her as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; and St. John, in the Book of Revelation, sets the dignity of marriage in the strongest light, when he speaks of the union of CHRIST and his church under that title. indeed the glory of the Christian Religion, that while it checks every approach to vice, and condemns even a thought that is impure, it sanctifies all the virtuous affections of our nature; it connects every relation of life with our duty to Gon; it bids us perform, for his sake, all those kind offices which even natural affection would lead us to perform for our own; while it sweetens the enjoyments, and lessens the serrows of love and friendship, by the hope which it gives of an eternal union with those who were most dear to

<sup>\*</sup> Ephes. v. 22, 25.

us on earth, in the presence of our Father who is in heaven.

To the sacred institution of marriage we owe the greatest blessings which this imperfect state affords, and to it we owe many of the virtues which will lead us to heaven. It was not good for man to be alone even in Paradise, and therefore our gracious God formed an help meet for him. This world affords no happiness equal to that of two pious and virtuous minds, united for ever by the sacred vow which they made in the presence of God, as well as by faithful and pure love; constantly endeavouring to make each other happy in this life, and joining in the practice of those duties which lead to still greater happiness in the next. Every act of kindness is then as much their pleasure, as it is their duty. Every word or action which contributes to the happiness of the object of their love, returns with interest into their own bosom. tempers regulated, and their conduct secured, by religion; no quarrels, no jealousies, will disturb their peace. Their interest being for ever united, their greatest pleasure is to assist each other. With what delight will the husband labour for the object of his love, sure to be re-

warded by seeing her happy! With what delight will she prepare his cheerful fire and comfortable meal; and meet him with smiles of duty and affection! If he be sick, she is his nurse; if he be distressed, she is his comforter. rounded by smiling, healthy, happy children, with what transport will they unite in forming their infant minds to piety and virtue! If they. live together to a good old age, from such children they may expect support and comfort; and even when the hour of trial comes, and death calls the husband from the wife, or the wife from her husband; through all the anguish of that dreadful moment, they will still hear a voice which tells them not to sorrow as those who have no hope, and they will look forward to an eternal union in a happier world.

Such should be the happiness of the marriage state, but I am very sorry to say that it is not often thus; and I will endeavour to point out the faults which prevent it. In the first place, if we expect happiness in marriage, we must be careful in our choice. Be not guided by the eye, by the fancy of a moment; but enquire in to the real character of the person with whom you are to pass your life. Has she been edu-

cated by virtuous parents, or has she by any other means been well instructed? Has she been accustomed to honest industry and frugality? Has she been free from vice, and does she dislike the company of bad people? Is she respected and beloved by those who are good; and above all, has she a just sense of her duty towards God? These are points upon which every prudent person, whether man or woman, would wish to be satisfied, before an engagement is formed which only death can dissolve. When that engagement is to be made, let each of the parties reflect on the solemn nature of it. In the awful presence of God, they are to make a vow which binds them to the end of life. Let no man, let no woman, dare to make that vow. without a firm resolution to perform it. That vow is recorded in Heaven, and the performance of it will be required at the judgment-seat of GoD.

Secondly, do not expect too much from each other. We are all poor, weak, sinful creatures, and require that indulgence from our friends, which we all hope from our Creator. We are too apt to expect that the object of our love is to be without faults, and we are out of humour when we are disappointed; but we should not

form such expectations. The best of us are often in the wrong, and true love will bear with faults, which do not come from the heart. A man may be off his guard, and speak hastily: but a gentle and tender wife will not contradict him in the moment of anger or ill-humour. Should he even be guilty of greater faults. however she may grieve at it, she will not reproach him, but make use of a more favourable time to lead him back to virtue. Let her always remember that she has promised obedience, and that Gop himself has given the husband power over the wife; but the gentle influence of a virtuous and beloved wife is very great over every heart which is not hardened in vice. Let her endeavour to preserve that influence by constant good temper, by neatness, and industry. Let her always try to make him happy at home, as the best way to prevent his going into bad company abroad.

Let the husband never forget what he owes to the friend of his heart, to the wife of his bosom. Let him guard her from every danger, let him tenderly watch over her happiness, let him be indulgent to little faults, and let him love and cherish her virtues. Women in general are disposed to be grateful and affectionate; and a man who deserves their love, will seldom fail to preserve it, especially if they have a proper sense of religion. Let each consider the other as their best friend, from whom they should never have any secrets, and of whom they should never complain to any other person. It is impossible that we can be perfectly happy in this world; there will be moments of discontent and disappointment; but they who are guided by a sense of duty, will always be ready to take the first step towards reconciliation, and to sacrifice their pride to their love.

Thirdly, never dispute about trifles. If constant attention were paid to this, it would seldom happen that two well-meaning and good people could be unhappy. They must think alike in great matters, if both seek the rule of their conduct in the law of God; but trifles, which are not worth disputing, often destroy the peace of a family. To guard against this, should be the business of both, but particularly of the wife, whose duty it is to yield in every thing which is not wicked.

Fourthly, never dispute before your children. This is a very common fault, and it is the ruin of all proper authority. If one parent is to encourage and humour a child, while the other reproves him; or if, while they teach him to be gentle and patient, they set him an example of perverseness and ill-humour in their behaviour to each other, he will soon despise them both. Let the parents always support each other's authority; let them set the example of every virtue which they wish the child to practise, and let each of them teach their children to love and respect the other.

This leads me to the important subject of education; and I earnestly request the attention of all those who are called to perform this duty. To them God has given a great blessing; for children are his gift, and happy is the man on whom He vouchsafes to bestow them. Let him never consider a large family as a hardship. If he be not able to maintain them, he has a right to expect assistance; but when they grow up, I believe it will be almost always seen, that a large family, well brought up, in the fear of God, and habits of honest industry, who are dutiful to their parents, and united by mutual affection; it will (I say) be almost always seen, that they succeed best in the world, and are a support,

instead of a burden, to each other. But if we expect the tree to flourish and take deep root. we must carefully form the tender plant. must not be exposed to the chilling frost of unkindness, or the constant sunshine of improper indulgence. We must train it in the way that it should go, and by constant care and gentle management we must raise it to that state of perfection, from which the happiest fruits may be reasonably expected. It is indeed possible that the best parent may be disappointed in the hopes which he had formed of his child; but this does not often happen, if constant and prudent care have been taken from infancy. On this subject I wish to address myself particularly to the mothers; for they are commonly entrusted with this most important part of education. The temper and disposition, the habit of obedience, and the first principles of religion, should all be formed during the first six or seven years, when the child is chiefly under the care of the mother. Women, if they are what they ought to be, seem particularly suited to this task, from the gentleness and tenderness of their dispositions, and the happy art which they possess of gaining affection, and softening authority by kindness. But they

are apt to fall into some errors from which I wish to guard them. They do not always consider the absolute necessity of teaching a child obedience from the very first. Before he can speak, he should learn this lesson, which sooner or later must be learnt by every created being. From infancy he should be taught, that nothing is to be gained by passion or crying. This is attended with very little difficulty, if it be done before any bad habits are formed, and custom will soon make it easy to the child; but we often see mothers, and especially amongst the poor, who never attempt to govern their children, till their little passions have gained so much strength, that they know not how to conquer them, except by methods which would never have been necessary if they had been taught obedience from the beginning. If a child have been accustomed from infancy to do what he is bid, and if his little heart have been gained by the kindness of a prudent mother, her displeasure will be his punishment, her praise will be his reward. Rough language and blows are almost always proofs that the parent did not know how to govern. observed of one sect of Christians, who have a remarkable command over their passions, that they never raise their voices in speaking to their children, or ever permit them to speak loud to each other. The good effects of this rule will be evident to all who steadily pursue it. The child will attend to the meaning of your words, instead of being frightened with the sound of them; and will soon know that he is governed like a reasonable creature, and not like a brute beast, which has no understanding.

This point being once gained, and the child being accustomed to immediate and ready obedience, without dispute or murmur, it remains that you use this power for his real good. Carefully watch the very first appearance of any thing wrong in his disposition, and check it immediately. Carefully guard against deceit. Teach him to own his faults; and when he does so, forgive them; but convince him that they are faults, and must be rooted out. Above all, give him early impressions of religion; teach him to fear God, and to tremble at the punishments prepared for the wicked in the next world. These are what we all ought to fear.

As your children grow up, give them reason to consider their parents as their best friends. Encourage them to open their hearts to you, and assist them in conquering their faults. Make. use of every assistance you can procure in teaching them their duty. Let them have such instruction as you can afford, but do not attempt to put them above their rank in life, for it will only make them discontented and unhappy. If it be possible, never let them be idle; for idleness is the root of all evil. Children should have time to play as well as to work, but they should not get a habit of doing nothing. Accustom them to be active, industrious, and neat. The more a man can do for himself, the less dependent he is upon other people. He who has learnt to be industrious and contented, is rich and happy. He who is idle and discontented, must be poor and miserable. When your children are of an age to marry and settle, prove your love for them by doing every thing in your power to make them happy. Assist them with your advice, and endeavour to prevent their being connected with a person of bad character; but do not suppose that you have any right to insist on their marrying any person against their own inclination. In every thing set them a good example, and pray to God to bless them.

Such are the duties of husbands and wives, of parents and children; and may God of his infinite mercy grant, that all who humbly endeavour to perform them for his sake, and according to his commandment, may escape the greatest affliction which a good mind can feel; I mean the pain of knowing that those whom they love most are unworthy of that love—the pain of seeing all their care and tenderness repaid with ingratitude. May all who have done their part with diligence, be rewarded by seeing the blessed effects of their care; may the husband and wife, the parent and child, love and bless each other; may they unite in serving God faithfully on earth, and in glorifying his name for ever in Heaven!

## SERMON XII.

### 2 CORINTHIANS viii. 9.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

AVING considered the duties which we all owe to God, and some of those which particular situations of life require from us, as children, as husbands, as parents; I will, in the present discourse, address myself particularly to those who depend on their own industry, with the blessing of God, for their support; and make some observations which relate principally to their situation in life.

Whatever opinion men may form of the advantages attendant on riches, and however they may despise poverty, it appears from the Gospel,

that these things are not so regarded by Him who made both the rich and the poor. We find that our Saviour Christ hid himself from those who would have made him a king, and that for our sakes he became poor. We are told that he was forn in a stable, and laid in a manger; that he was supposed to be the son of a carpenter; that he was so poor that it was necessary for him to work a miracle, in order to pay the accustomed tribute; and he describes his own situation in these remarkable words,-" Foxes have holes. and the birds of the air have nests; but the son of man hath not where to lay his head."\* Such was the situation in which the LORD of heaven and earth was pleased to appear amongst men; and by doing so he has exalted the humble, and made his example particularly useful to the He did not appear in the character of a rich man, of a conqueror, of a statesman, or of a monarch; but the poor man sees his Saviour perform all the duties of his own situation in life, and may learn from him humility, patience, and resignation. To him then let us look for the pattern of every virtue, while we consider the duties which belong to an humble station in this

<sup>\*</sup> Luke ix. 58.

world; and let us learn to reverence that station in which the Son of God did not disdain to appear.

Many who pretend to wish well to the poor, endeavour to make them discontented with their condition in this life, by telling them that all men are equal, and representing all the distinctions of rank and fortune as an attack on the just rights of the poor. So much has been said on this subject of late, that I am anxious to remove the impression which such artful reasoners sometimes make on weak or ignorant minds; and I request your attention, while I lay before you the real state of things in this world. That all men are born equal is very far from the truth. All are indeed born weak and helpless, and dependent even for food on the assistance of others; but it is certain that some children are born with much more strength of body than others, and some with much more strength of mind; and it is equally certain, that some are born rich, and others poor, according to the will of God, who alone orders whether any man shall come into the world in a palace; or in a cottage; but in whichever it be, he has a right to share the inheritance of his father, according to the laws of

his country. Thus men are born unequal; and the necessary consequence is, that through life some will be stronger, some will be wiser, and some will be richer than others. No man, who believes what he reads in his Bible, can doubt that this was the intention of Providence; for from the very first, God gave power to the husband over the wife, to the father over his children, and even to the elder brother over the younger, as appears by the story of Cain and Abel.\* It must be acknowledged, that this dispensation of Providence places some men in a more comfortable situation than others: for poverty and nakedness, cold and hunger, are great evils; and we might reasonably wonder that some of the children of God should enjoy a much larger portion of the good things of this world than others, if our short life on earth were all we had to consider. But this is the fatal mistake which has ruined thousands, and in our own times has made the world a field of blood. Men consider this life as a time of enjoyment, not as a time of trial; and finding themselves less happy than some of their neighbours, they try to make all equal, and in doing so, they make all miserable. Let us therefore consider the world as the Holy Scripture represents it.

We are never taught to view this world as a state of happiness, though many blessings are bestowed to support us in our passage through it. This life is called a journey, a warfare, a pilgrimage; we are told that here we have no abidingplace, but that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God. Our business here is to prepare for heaven; and whatever be the state in which we are most likely to work out our salvation, and obtain the favour of GoD; this is the state in which a wise and a good man would wish to be placed. Our gracious God has been pleased to order that different men should be tried in different ways. He has appointed different ranks amongst mankind, and He has commanded us to submit to those whom He has set over us, for his sake. Why one man was born a king, and another a beggar, is known to God alone; but if they serve him faithfully in their different stations, both will be accepted by Him; and though we are not all equal when we come into this life, we certainly are so when we go out of it, except in what is the consequence of our own good or bad conduct here. We are

indeed often mistaken, in thinking that they who are born in a high station are the happiest, even in this world; and many a sleepless night is spent by those who govern kingdoms to secure the peace of the poor man's cottage; but this is not the point which ought to be considered by the heir of immortal glory. Whether we are clothed in purple, and fare sumptuously every day, or whether we lie at the gate full of sores; whether we sleep on a bed of down, or like our blessed LORD, have not where to lav our head; still a few more days and nights must put an end to these distinctions. The rich and the poor must alike rest in the grave, the rich and the poor must alike rise to judgment, the rich and the poor must alike be sentenced to eternal happiness or misery.

If we consider the good of the whole community, even in this world, it is easy to prove, that different ranks in society contribute much to the happiness of mankind. There must be some men appointed to make laws for the protection of all, or the strong would oppress the weak. There must be some to defend the rest, or the country would be a prey to every invader, and none could eat the fruit of his own industry.

There must be some rich, or those who meet with misfortunes could hope for no relief. There must be a king, to be the common father and friend of all, to direct the execution of the laws, to restrain vice, and to protect innocence.

If all these do their duty, all contribute to the welfare of the poor, and all have reason to love each other, and to unite in praising God for the blessings of a well-ordered government. But if we view this world as a state of trial, then the only point to be considered is, in what situation a man is most likely to work out his salvation. and attain everlasting happiness; and considering it in this light, which is certainly the true one, I believe it will be found that the rich are not to be envied, and that those are happiest, whom Providence has placed in an humbler station. We are all taught to pray that God would not lead us into temptation; and many certainly are the temptations which the rich and prosperous must withstand, if they will do their duty; many are the vices which they are led to commit, from which poverty secures those who cannot mix in scenes of riot and unlawful pleasure. And will not any man, who knows the value of eternal happiness, consider this as a blessing?

Will he not thank God, that he was taught in the school of poverty to set his affections on things above?

It is indeed true that extreme distress brings temptations of a different kind; and if we were at liberty to choose for ourselves, every wise man would say with Agur in the book of Proverbs,\* "Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." But He, who best knows what is fit for us, has not left us this choice. He has placed us in different situations, and has commanded all to do the duties of that state, to which He has been pleased to call them: while He offers to all his grace and assistance in this life. and eternal happiness in the next. Christian, therefore, presume to repine at the order of Providence; but let each consider the particular duties of his own station, and endeavour to perform them.

I will now point out some of the duties of that rank in life, which our Saviour was pleased to assume, and of which he has left us a glorious

<sup>\*</sup> Proverbs xxx. 8, 9.

example. It is the duty of the poor to be contented, and never to murmur at the dispensations of Providence. If we are perfectly convinced of this great truth, that all the events of life are directed by an all-wise and good God, who orders them in the way that is best for us, and will at last make all work together for good to those who love Him, we shall be ready to follow the example of Christ, and to say, "Not my will, but thine be done!"

It is the duty of the poor to be industrious. From the beginning God commanded man to labour. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,"\* was the sentence passed on every son of Adam. Every man is commanded to employ those talents which God has given him, and none is allowed to be idle. Every man living ought to say with his Saviour, "I must work the work of God." But the poor man is particularly obliged to be industrious, less distress should tempt him to dishonesty. This is a point of great importance, and should be considered with attention. When a man, by idleness or vice, has reduced himself to such poverty that he cannot procure the necessaries of

life, he is sometimes tempted to commit actions. on which, at other times, he would have trembled to think. For this reason it is very important that young persons should be taught some means of gaining an honest maintenance, and they should also be taught to be strictly just and honest in all their actions. One important step towards this is the habit of constantly speaking truth. The falsehood and deceit which are continually practised in the world, and particularly in trade, are a disgrace to a christian country. Many a man, who would not steal his neighbour's money, will yet by lies and deceit lead him to spend it for damaged goods. Many a man. who would be offended if he were called a liar, will every day make promises to his customers which he never intends to perform. Many a man who would wish to be thought a good subject, and an honest man, will yet gain a scandalous profit by smuggling, in defiance of the laws of his country. Many, who would not steal a purse, will take up goods for which they know that they cannot pay, and injure the honest trader by false pretences and deceitful promises. Yet all these pretend to be followers of Him "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his

mouth;"\* of Him who came to guide us into all truth; for "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are of good report,"† all may be learnt from the glorious example of Christ.

The best rule for the general conduct of our lives in all our dealings with other men is that which our Saviour gives us in his admirable sermon on the Mount: "Whatsoever ve would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to Every Christian should try his dealings with others by this rule. Are you a farmer? Consider how you would wish to be treated, if you were a poor, labouring man. Are you a labourer? Consider how you would wish your work to be done, if you were a farmer. Are you a shopkeeper? Consider how you would like to be deceived in goods which you wanted to buy. Are you in want of what is sold in that shop? Consider whether you would not expect a reasonable profit, if you were a shopkeeper. Thus, in every transaction put yourself in the place of the person with whom you are to deal, consider how you would then wish to be treated,

<sup>\* 1</sup> Pet. ii. 22. † Phil. iv. 8.

and do what in that case you would wish should be done unto you.

Before I finish this address to the poor, let me exhort them, from the precepts and example of Christ, to pay a dutiful and constant obedience to the laws of their country. No man who looks into his Bible can doubt that this is the duty of every Christian; and in this happy land the poor are particularly bound to fulfil it, as there is perhaps no country in the world where they are so well protected by the laws. In this country, and at this time, it may truly be said, that the King is the Father of his people, and that the rich are in most instances the guardians and protectors of the poor. \*Times of distress and scarcity may be sent by Providence for the punishment of a sinful nation: but let not any man, who knows that the Lord is King, murmur at his dispensations. Riot and rebellion must increase the evil, how great soever it may be; while patient submission to the will of God, and charitable assistance afforded to each other, will lessen the distress to all. In such times, we know that what can be done, by the wisdom of our laws, and by that humanity which is the

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glory of our country, will not be wanting. If these are not sufficient to remove the distress, we must trust in Gop, and patiently wait his time. Calamities, which appear the most alarma ing, are often removed by the gracious providence of Gop, when we least expect it; and when human wisdom fails, still it often happens that God shews us a way to escape. In Him then let the poor man trust, and if all that he can do be not sufficient for the support of his family, let him remember the words of David. "I have been young and now am old, and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread."\* The man, who after having done his utmost to gain an honest livelihood, casts all his care on God, and places his helpless wife and children under his protection, that man need not fear either for them or for himself. His gracious God will relieve his distress, or will call him to receive the reward of his patience and submission in a happier world. Let every man gratefully acknowledge the blessings of good laws. him never forget the duty and loyalty which he owes to a good King. Let him faithfully obey those laws, and renounce all dishonest gains.

<sup>\*</sup> Psalm xxxvii. 25.

When the country is prosperous and happy, let him eat the fruits of honest labour with a grateful and cheerful heart. When God is pleased to send distress, let him support his share of it with patience, and do every thing in his power to lessen the distresses of others; and if it be the will of God that this great and severe trial should continue, still let us all say with the prophet, and let us say it from our hearts, "Although the figtree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."\* Him be glory now and for ever. Amen.

<sup>\*</sup> Hab. iii. 16.

## SERMON XIII.

#### ACTS X. 38.

## Who went about doing good.

our blessed Saviour, have in every age borne witness to the benevolence of his character, and have owned that charity is the glory of that religion which he taught. That he went about doing good; that the wonders of his power were displayed in shewing mercy and pity; that he lived to instruct, to assist, and to relieve, those whom he died to save; these are truths which are confessed by all who believe the scriptures. He was sent to heal the broken in heart; none ever applied to him for relief in vain. He shed tears at the tomb of Lazarus. He had compassion on the unhappy widow who had lost her only son.

He felt for all who were in affliction. Even those who had least reason to expect it, shared his pity. He wept over that ungrateful city in which his sacred blood was to be shed; the last miracle before his death was performed to heal one of the soldiers who were sent to take him: and he prayed for his murderers while he hung bleeding on the cross. His parables, as well as his miracles, every where abound in proofs of this exalted virtue. His Sermon on the Mount contains the noblest lessons of humanity. This virtue was displayed in every part of his life, and he recommended it in his last charge to his disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."\* The effect of these instructions was for some time so remarkable amongst the disciples of our LORD, that it led the heathens to say, "See how these Christians love one another."

Alas! mybrethren, were those heathens to take a view of many countries where this divine religion has been for ages established, would they now have reason to say, See how these Christians love one another? Yet if such be the true spirit of the Gospel, can those pretend to be the dis-

ciples of Christ, who seek only their own advantage or pleasure, who injure and oppress their neighbours? Certainly not. The Christian must constantly endeavour to do good. Following the example of his Great Master, he will comfort the afflicted, support the weak, and heal the broken in heart. He will, as far as lies in his power, deal out his bread to the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the sick. It is not enough that we do no harm, that none can accuse us of dishonesty or cruelty. We must do good. The world is full of sorrows, and it is the duty of the Christian to relieve them. It may be said, and with truth, that charity is the glory of this nation; and perhaps there never was a country in which so much attention was paid to lessen the sufferings of the poor. The constant relief afforded to them by parish rates, the establishment of such numbers of schools and hospitals, and the large sums given in private charity, are as honourable to the rich, as they are useful to the poor. These things should be thankfully acknowledged by those who receive such comfort; and GoD grant that they may bring down a blessing on the heads of those who give; that all may be united by the sacred bond of kindness and gratitude, and

all, in their different stations, may be thankful for the blessings they enjoy from regular and just government, proper subordination, and Christian charity. But while we give due praise to those amongst the higher classes who practise this heavenly virtue, the poor may possibly think that nothing which can be said on this subject relates to them. They have perhaps nothing to give; their hardest labour only procures necessaries for their families. They cannot enjoy the pleasure of doing good, they cannot share in the blessings promised to those who thus follow the example of their LORD. This, my beloved brethren, is a very common, but it is a very great mistake; and it shall be my business in this discourse to point out the duty of the poor in this respect, and to shew them how they may contribute to the happiness of their fellow-creatures; and draw down on their own heads the blessing of GoD.

In order to prove this, let me beg you to take a view of the principal distresses to which we are subject in our passage through this world, and to consider how few of them can be relieved by money only. When we are tortured by pain, will money remove it? When we have lost a darling child, will riches bring him back again? When we sink under a sense of guilt, and tremble at approaching punishment, will riches heal the wounded heart? In all these and many other sorrows, what can the rich man do more than the poor to comfort the afflicted? But both may do If your friend be sick, you whom he knows and loves may speak comfort to his heart; you may watch by his side during the tedious sleepless night, you may prepare his food or medicine, and by all the tender offices of friendship, you may greatly lessen the sufferings which the wealth of worlds could not remove. You may do this for your neighbour, though he be not your particular friend; you may do it even for your enemy. And will not God bless you for such actions, as much as He would have done. if you had been able and willing to give money in order to hire a nurse to do such offices for the sick? This is all that riches could do; but the nurse who is thus hired, will not give the same comfort to the sufferer as the well-known voice of a friend or neighbour. She cannot give the same comfort as the unexpected assistance of a person who had perhaps reason to be offended with him, but who forgives as he hopes to be forgiven.

If it have pleased GoD to deprive a parent of his child, riches cannot bring him back again; but even in the deepest affliction, what heart is insensible to the voice of kindness? In vain might you offer money to the poor mourner; that is not what he wants. But sit by his side in silence, share his grief, mix your tears with his, and when you find a proper moment in which to offer consolation, talk to him of the promises of God. Tell him of that glorious place where all that he has lost will be restored; where friends will meet, to part no more. Perform the duty of the lost child to the aged parent; assist him; take care of him; forgive him, if at first he cannot thank you as he would wish, in time his mind will be more composed, he will be resigned to the will of God, he will feel your kindness, and his soul will bless you. If it have pleased God. to deprive a child of his parent, take care of the poor orphan; give him your advice, your assistance; tell him that he has still a Father in heaven. who will never leave nor forsake him.

Is any unhappy wanderer from the right path recalled to a sense of his duty by some merciful judgment of God? Does he feel the weight of his sins, and tremble at the punishment which he has

reason to dread? There is no sorrow like this. and it is one for which the wealth of worlds could afford no relief. But speak to that man of the mercy of GoD; tell him of a laving Saviour. who died for him. and for us all. Tell him that pardon is offered, even to the greatest of sinners, if they will believe and repent. Convince him that what he suffers in this world is sent in mercy to save his soul in the great day of the LORD. Advise him to throw himself at the feet of his offended GoD; to leave off from sin; and humbly on his knees to beg that mercy, which will never be refused to the true penitent. Turn to the sacred scriptures. Speak of Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Tell him of a weeping Magdalen, who was forgiven because she loved much. Tell him of a penitent thief, to whom his Saviour promised the blessings of paradise. If you cannot succeed in composing his mind, persuade him to apply to those who are commissioned by Christ to feed his flock with heavenly food. Should that man, instead of a desponding sinner, become an accepted penitent, you have done more good than those whose wealth has kept thousands from perishing with hunger. One immortal soul is of far more importance.

Even in those cases where money is most wanted, think not that you can only do good with a purse in your hand. Those who have wealth employ it nobly in assisting the poor; but those who have none may still assist by advice and by If your poor neighbour see you always contented and cheerful, if he see that by honest industry you struggle through hardships as great as his own, he will be encouraged to do likewise. If he see that you put your trust in God, and are supported, he may be led to do the same; and surely he who relieves our wants, does not half so much for our real advantage, as he who teaches us to bear them like Christians. can do nothing else, you can pray for the unfortunate; and we know that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."\*

Let no servant of God ever suppose that he has nothing to do. We may be called to work in different parts of our Lord's vineyard, but every one has his appointed task. We may do good by our advice, we may do good by our example, we may do good by our prayers. In youth we

may assist others by our labour, and through life by our kindness; even in our last moments we may still do good, and if it be too late to shew others how to live, we may still teach them how to die.

By bearing one another's burthens, we lighten the load to all. I will venture to assure all who hear me, (and I appeal for the truth of what I say to the experience of every generous heart,) that the best comfort in our own affliction is endeavouring to make others happy. No man was ever tired of life, whilst he was employed in doing good. Whoever thou art who feelest thy mind oppressed with sorrow, thy spirits sunk, thy activity gone; if the world present no object which seems worthy of thy care, if thou view it with weariness and disgust, one remedy remains. Consider if it be possible for thee in any way whatever to do good. This is possible in every situation. Do it without delay; exert all thy power for the happiness of others, and thou wilt find thy own. And ye who still think that poverty prevents your being of much use to others, let me entreat you, in the last place, to consider that our Saviour and his Apostles, and almost all the first Christians, were poor; and that no other men ever did so much good. Our LORD had not where to lay his head. St. Peter says, "silver and gold have. I none."\* . St. Paul maintained himself by working with his hands. The saints at Jerusalem were supported by the charity of a distant church and nation. Yet these were the men who spread blessings over the whole earth, and whose example we all ought to imitate. We cannot indeed work miracles, as some of them did, but still we may do much. We cannot restore the blind to sight; but we can be eves to the blind, by assisting and supporting him. We cannot bid the lame man rise up and walk; but we can lead him on his way. We cannot heal the sick, but we can comfort them; we can assist them with medicine or food, and greatly lessen their sufferings. And there is one of the works of mercy which our Saviour points out as the effect of his appearance on earth, in which all may assist. "The poor," says he, "have the Gospel preached to them." † Wisdom is no longer confined to a few, but all men are now called to hear the glad tidings of salvation: All are called to share in that mercy which is offered through CHRIST to the whole world. And here, my

<sup>\*</sup> Acts iii. 6. † Matt. xi. 5.

brethren, all may endeavour to imitate the example of our Saviour and his Apostles. We are not indeed all called to preach, but we may all speak to each other of the loving-kindness of the LORD. If we do this, and try to lead our poor afflicted brother to the Father of Mercy, and God of all comfort; if our advice and example induce him to seek those things which belong to his peace; we have done much more good than those who have the power to heal his sickness, or relieve his wants. If we train up our children in the way of godliness, if we teach them to be industrious and contented, we give them the best and most valuable riches. And if, by precept or example, you instruct others that "godliness with contentment is great gain;"\* and lead them to trust in Gop, and to obey his laws, instead of being idle, dishonest, swearers, drunkards, thieves, or liars, which would ruin their souls for ever; can there be a doubt that you have done more good than those do, who by giving money can only lessen the miseries which such crimes produce?

Think not that such labours of love will be of no account with Him who reckoneth with every man according to what he hath, and not according

to what he hath not. We are told that at the great day He will say to the righteous, who have fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, " Forasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Surely, then, He will not look with less favour on those who have taught the unfortunate to turn these sorrows into blessings, by setting them an example of Christian resignation; who have fed the hungry with the bread of life, and visited the sick and the prisoner, to give them heavenly consolation. These are the greatest acts of charity which one Christian can perform to another; and they may be performed by all. Let no man therefore, however poor, however unhappy he may be, let no man suppose that he is to think only of himself; but let him remember, that though we are called to assist each other in different ways, all may and must do good. Every day, in which we have not contributed, in some way or other, to the happiness, the assistance, or the improvement of our fellow Christians, should be considered as lost. And let not those who feel that they cannot do much, be afraid of losing their reward, while they do all they can. The widow's mite was accepted by

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CHRIST, and declared to be of more value than the large offerings of the rich. Do all you can; by giving money if you have it, and if not, by friendly assistance, by advice, and by example: and when nothing else remains to give for the relief of the unfortunate, give him your prayers. The prayer of faith may heal the sick, when all the skill of the physician fails. The prayer of faith may reach the Throne of Mercy, and bring down blessings on his head, and on your own. Perhaps, when we all meet in another world, the poor sufferer may thank you for it, more than for any assistance which money could have afforded him. And He who went about doing good, and who has commanded us all to go and do likewise, He will not forget your labour of love; but will say to every one who has done the best he could, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy LORD."†

### SERMON XIV.

ST. LUKE XXII. 42.

Not my will, but thine be done.

HEN the only-begotten Son of God left the bosom of his Father, and took upon him the nature of man, he was also pleased to take on himself the sorrows to which men are subject, and greater than any other man ever felt. "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was afflicted and tormented. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter."\* But amidst all these dreadful trials he has left us a glorious example of patience, and resignation to the will of God. In

<sup>\*</sup> Isaiah liii. 3, 7.

his agony in the garden, when he appears to have felt such anguish as never was inflicted on any other man, when "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground;"\* he then taught us how every good man should meet the severest trials which can befal him. He prayed earnestly, that, if it were possible, God would remove this cup from him, but immediately he adds, "Not my will, but thine be done." With this example ever before our eyes, I will consider the situation of a christian under those afflictions, which at some time or other of our lives are the lot of all; and will point out the conduct which the Gospel requires from him. In order to make what I wish to say on this subject more clear and distinct, I will mention, first, the sorrows which we receive immediately from the hand of GoD; secondly, those which are inflicted upon us by men; and lastly, those which we bring on ourselves.

The sorrows which we receive from the hand of God, are often great; but they are almost always, in the course of our lives, mixed with many and great mercies. We have many days of health for one day of sickness, many hours of

<sup>•</sup> Luke xxii. 44.

ease for one of pain, many comforts to balance one affliction. This ought to be gratefully acknowledged, even when the day of trial comes; and we should say with Job, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken Blessed be the name of the LORD."\* But still the day of trial must come, and we ought to be prepared to meet it. The most common trials which we experience from the hand of God are sickness, poverty, and the loss of friends. Our best support in all these is the firm belief that every affliction is sent in mercy, to make us more virtuous and more happy. It is an undoubted truth, which I wish to impress on the minds of all who hear me, that we never can be perfectly happy in this world or the next, till we have learnt submission to the will of Gop, and have renounced every evil inclination, which would lead us out of that path in which He has commanded us to walk. If we have not sufficiently learnt this lesson in the school of mercy, we must be taught it by affliction; but this lesson is not learnt as it ought to be, till, humbled in the dust, we bless our gracious God for our sufferings as

sincerely as for our enjoyments. This we shall do, when we are fully convinced that they are for our real good, and never would have been sent by the Father of Mercy, but to lead us to repentance, to strengthen us in virtue, and to work for us an eternal weight of glory. In this light the good man views every affliction of every kind; and though the flesh may tremble when racked with pain, though the strength may fail when struggling with poverty, though the tears may flow over the dying friend; still he will bend the trembling knees, he will lift up the feeble hands, he will raise the streaming eyes to Heaven, and bless his Father and his God.

Pain and sickness are evils which at some part of their lives all feel; and they are indeed great trials. When God is pleased to send this affliction to any man, he may lawfully seek those means of relief which are to be found. He may humbly pray to God for his blessing on the skill of the physician; but still he must say, after the example of his blessed Master, "Not my will, but thine be done." If it be God's pleasure that his sufferings should continue, he must carefully guard against impatience. He must thankfully acknowledge the kindness of his

friends, and never add to their distress by peevishness and ill-humour. He must, as far as possible, suppress complaints, and shew by manly resolution that he cheerfully submits to the will of God. He must not forget to thank Him for every blessing which he still enjoys; if he have a comfortable home, needful food, and kind relations and friends, these are blessings for which he should then be doubly thankful. If the want of these add to his distress, if every earthly comfort fail, still he should say with Eli, " It is the LORD, let him do what seemeth Him good." Whatever his sufferings may be, let him still remember that his Saviour suffered more. and suffered for his sake; let him consider, that how great soever his pain may be, it cannot keep him long from the regions of eternal joy. If providence allow no other relief, still the Christian trusts that death will end all his sufferings, and lead him to everlasting happiness.

Poverty is a great trial. By poverty, I am far from meaning any situation in which a man can supply himself with the necessaries of life by honest industry; but I speak of those who have no means of supplying their most pressing wants; who are destitute of lodging, raiment, or food.

In this unhappy situation, the good man should pray to God for assistance; and if it be really out of his power to procure, by any kind of work, the things which are necessary for him, he may very properly ask the assistance of others. Any man who does this while he can support himself, is little better than a thief; as he draws from those who are charitably disposed the money which should have been given to such as really want it. The rich are in general ready to assist those whose character and conduct give them a just claim on their bounty, and the relief which is thus obtained should be acknowledged with gratitude. Even if it be refused, never let distress, however great, tempt any man to dishonest practices. Let the unhappy sufferer cast all his care on God, who will never leave him or forsake him, but will either send relief to his sorrows, or call him to Himself, when he has felt his appointed portion of affliction.

The loss of friends is a very severe trial. When all our earthly happiness seems to be buried with a wife, a child, or a friend, who was dear to us as our own soul, the firmest mind will yield to grief. But here, my brethren, we see the glorious triumph of Christianity. The poor

heathens knew not that friends who were separated by death would ever meet again; but the Christian looks beyond the grave. He sorrows indeed, but not without hope. He weeps, but he knows that God will soon wipe all tears from his eyes. His friends are not lost for ever; they are only gone before, where he must soon follow. He hopes that they will bid him welcome to a better world, where all who have obtained mercy through Christ, will meet to part no more.

These and many other trials and afflictions come to us immediately from the hand of GoD; but there are others in which our sufferings proceed from our fellow-creatures, and I wish to make a few remarks on the proper behaviour under them. If we suffer justly from those who have a lawful authority over us, it is certainly the duty of all men patiently to submit. are unjustly treated, we may use such means as the laws of the land provide for our defence against oppression; and in this happy country they afford all possible security to our lives and to our property; but prudence and charity require that we should, if possible, rather settle disputes by a private agreement than bring them into a court of justice. If our adversary will not

hear reason, the law is open; but in no case are we at liberty to avenge ourselves. In all injuries. we must constantly keep in mind the mild precepts of the Gospel; we must never return evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing. As this is a point of great importance, it shall be made the subject of a separate discourse. At present I will only observe further, that to whatever cause we owe our misfortunes, if we have no lawful means to escape, we should consider them as sent by God for our advantage, though perhaps brought upon us by the hands of wicked men. Such men are often his instruments for the trial of his faithful servants; and as they could have no power over us; except it were given them from above, we must not regard them in what we suffer, but acknowledge the hand of GoD in every thing.

Lastly, there are sufferings which men bring upon themselves, by their own folly, imprudence, and vice. In this case all we can do is, to humble ourselves under the just judgment of God; and we have great reason to bless Him, if the punishment, which sooner or later must fall on every sinner who does not repent, is inflicted in this world, while there is still room to hope that by

repentance and amendment we may be restored to the favour of God, through the merits and mediation of Christ, and that when our sufferings here shall be ended, we may still find mercy at the last day.

If the time would permit, I might mention many other trials to which men are subject in this world; but a few general observations may be applied to them all.

First, let me beg those who are in a more prosperous condition, to observe that afflictions are not always punishments. They are sometimes sent to the very best men, while the wicked appear to be in great prosperity. The scripture indeed leads us to consider the afflicted as peculiarly favoured by God. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."\* Those, who are most strong in faith, are often called to set an example of patience to others. This is a glorious distinction, and will obtain for them a brighter crown. Such were the Apostles and Martyrs; and such are seen in every age, whose trials only make their virtues shine with greater lustre. They are indeed happy, for their light afflictions will procure for them a glorious reward.

Secondly, when we see men, whose lives have been notoriously wicked, suffering, as it sometimes happens, under some striking judgment of the Almighty, such an example should make us tremble for ourselves. But, even in that case, we must not dare to pronounce any rash censure upon them. We know not how far any man is guilty in the sight of GoD; because, though we see the crime, we do not know the circumstances that led to it. We do not know whether the sinner had the happiness of being taught his duty, or to what temptations he was exposed. And whatever be the character of the sufferer, let us remember that though he may deserve punishment from God, he is entitled to pity and comfort from us. Never let us insult his distress, or add to the sorrows of him whom God has wounded. Let us give him our assistance and our advice. Let us endeavour to lead him into the right way, and set before him all the comforts which religion offers to those who sincerely repent. Let us pray for him; and let us humbly hope that such judgments are intended to punish him in this life, that his soul may be saved in the day of the Lord. When, on the other hand, we see those who we have reason to believe are virtuous and good men, visited with great afflictions, let us look on them not only with pity, but with reverence. Let us consider them as the favoured children of God, who are counted worthy to suffer for his sake. Let us try to imitate the glorious example of their patience and resignation; and treasure it in our hearts till our day of trial shall come.

Thirdly, let those who are in affliction of any kind, carefully examine their own hearts. Let them consider whether any unrepented sin has brought this judgment upon them; if so, let them instantly renounce and forsake it. best men fairly examine the state of their hearts, they will allow that it is good for them to have been afflicted. If they feel and acknowledge this, and can humbly and sincerely thank GoD for the trials, as well as for the blessings, which He is pleased to send them, they have reason to hope that all they suffer here will work for them an eternal weight of glory. If they have reason to believe that they are found worthy to be set as examples to others, that they are called to suffer for the glory of God, and the good of their fellow-creatures, after the example of the Apostles and Martyrs; then they may indeed

glory in tribulation. They may suffer, not only with patience, but with joy. They may rejoice with the Apostles, that they were found worthy to suffer for his sake who died for them. The glorious privilege of following their crucified Master, of proving to all the world their love and gratitude to him, will make them even take pleasure in afflictions. They will look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith, who for their sakes endured the cross, despising the shame; they will follow him through pain and sickness, through poverty and distress, through reproach and persecution; and in all these things they will be more than conquerors. The glories of Heaven are ever before their eyes, and every earthly sorrow will appear as nothing. Happy, indeed, are they who have thus learned Christ; but few of us, I fear, have attained to such perfection; and Gop, who knows our weakness, does not call us to suffer more than we are able to bear. Trusting in his support, convinced of his kindness, and hoping for his mercy, let us all, when He visits us with affliction, endeavour to bear it with patience and resignation, that it may answer the ends for which it is in general designed, by correcting our faults, purifying our

minds, and making us less unworthy the favour of Gop.

Lastly, I address myself to those who as vet have not been called to any severe trials, who as yet enjoy health and strength, and to whom the evil days appear to be still at a distance. Let me entreat you to remember, that in this world we must not expect to be always happy; and though we may thankfully enjoy every day of ease and prosperity which GoD is pleased to allow us; yet we ought always to be prepared for the trials which will certainly follow, and never to set our hearts so much on any earthly blessing, as to be unwilling to resign it at the command of Gop. Remember the advice of the wise son of Sirach, which you will find in the second chapter of Ecclesiasticus; a chapter which I wish particularly to recommend to all young persons, as containing a most important and useful lesson. son, if thou come to serve the LORD, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of trouble. For gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity." And now, my Christian brethren, as we must all sooner or later taste the bitter cup of affliction,

let us all apply for succour to Him who alone can enable us cheerfully to receive it; and let me entreat you, with humble and penitent hearts, to join with me in prayer.

Assist us mercifully, O Lord, in these our supplications and prayers, and dispose the way of thy servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation; that amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life, they may ever be defended by thy most gracious and ready help, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### SERMON XV.

ST. LUKE XXIII. 34.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

considered as one of the strongest proofs of a truly Christian disposition. It is the glory of our religion, that it has carried this exalted virtue to a height which never before was known in the world. Revenge is no longer allowed on any pretence whatever. Resentment is no longer to be called courage. To return evil for evil is no longer to be called justice. The Christian must forgive, if he hope to be forgiven. His courage must be shewn in nobly enduring sufferings or injuries. His justice must be displayed in an humble acknowledgment, that, as we have all

sinned, we should all shew that mercy to each other, which we hope to receive from God. Convinced of the weakness of human nature, he pities, he prays for the unhappy offender; to whom he hopes God will forgive much greater sins than he can commit against his fellow-creatures.

On this subject, my beloved brethren, our blessed Master has left us the most glorious and striking example that is to be found in the history of the whole world. All mankind had offended him, yet he died for all. During the course of his life, we see him continually practising this noblest of virtues. When his disciples would have called fire from heaven, to consume those who would not receive him, he mildly answered, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; and he went to another village."\* When Judas. who had been his chosen friend, betrayed him to his murderers, what was his language to this greatest of criminals? "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" t When one of his followers rashly wounded a soldier who came to take him, Jesus said, "Put up thy sword." "Suffer ye thus far; and he touched his ear and healed him." When Peter whom he so much

<sup>\*</sup> Luke ix. 55. † Luke xxii. 48. ‡ Luke xxii. 51.

loved, and who had promised such faithful attachment, fell into the temptation of which his kind Master had given him warning; when before the cock crew he had denied him thrice, how did he treat this unhappy man? "And the Lond turned, and looked upon Peter."\* It was a look which touched him to the heart, a look no doubt of kindness and compassion, for he went out and wept bitterly.

Every feeling heart must be struck with the particular attention shewn to this penitent and reconciled friend after our LORD's resurrection: when the Angel says to the pious women, "Tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Gallilee, there shall ve see him."† Saviour seems impatient that Peter should know, not only that his LORD was risen indeed, but that he was himself forgiven, and still the object of his love. But, above all, my text displays such a proof of this exalted virtue, as was never given by any other man. None ever felt such torments, none ever received such injuries, no other man therefore ever had so much to forgive; yet at that dreadful moment of almost insupportable agony, amidst the insults of those who

<sup>\*</sup> Luke xxii. 61. † Mark xvi. 7.

inflicted these torments, of those for whose sake he endured them, what is the language of our dying Saviour? "Father, forgive them!"

With such an example before our eyes, it is strange that any Christian should find it difficult to forgive. It is strange that it should still be necessary to say, Avenge not yourselves.

Consider, I entreat you, our situation in this world with regard to each other. We are all weak, frail, sinful creatures. The best of us seldom passes through one day, without feeling that he requires forgiveness from his God, and too often from his fellow-creatures also. Mercy is all our hope; forgiveness is our constant prayer. In such a state, should we not pity and assist each other? Does not mutual weakness call for mutual forbearance? But weak, and frail, and sinful as we are, yet through the merits of Christ we all hope to attain the happiness of Heaven. And can creatures, who, after a few short years, expect to be for ever united in the presence of their God, to be set free from all unruly passions, and to live together for ever in Heaven, in peace, and joy, and everlasting love; can such creatures hate each other on earth? Can they add to the sorrows of this state of trial, and spread more

thorns on the path of life, by malice and revenge? Can they risk their own eternal happiness, by denying to each other that forgiveness, without which they must not dare to hope that they shall be themselves forgiven? To set the necessity and the nature of this duty in the clearest light, I will consider, first, how we are required to act under great injuries; and secondly, what is our duty in regard to those smaller offences, which often disturb the peace of society.

We are not often called to forgive great offences; yet such there are, and every Christian should be prepared to meet with them. man may be robbed of his property; an attempt may be made to rob him of his life. He may be robbed of what is perhaps still dearer to him, the honour of his wife or daughter. A treacherous friend may ruin his domestic peace; an unprovoked enemy may destroy his reputation. These are great injuries, and every man feels them as such. In these and all such cases, Christianity does not forbid that we should defend ourselves to a certain degree. We may defend our house from the thief, and our life from the murderer. We may apply to the law to punish these crimes, and the still greater injury sustained from the seducer and the adulterer. If our character be attacked, we may defend it by exposing the falsehood of the charge; and in every case we may use such means of selfdefence as the laws of our country put into our hands; but we must be sure that we do this to prevent crimes, not in order to be revenged on the criminal. If we bring a wicked man to justice, our motive for it must be, to prevent his injuring others, to make him an example, in order that others may be afraid to offend; we must do it, because the laws of our country command us not to conceal such crimes as should be punished for the good of society. On these principles a man ought to bring an offender to justice; but never from any wish of being revenged for the injury done to himself. This is a point in regard to which a Christian should carefully examine his own heart. Let there be no malice there. However great the injury may be, the offender is still in a state to hope for mercy from God, if he repent; and let him find it from you. However great the injury may be, your Saviour suffered more; and if you are his true disciple, you will say with him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Alas! no man knows what he

does, when he offends God by such crimes. Think of the state of him who has wronged you, and resentment must be changed to pity. Think of the situation of a man who has lost the favour of God, who has committed crimes which will plunge him in endless misery if he do not repent, who is still perhaps in a hardened, impenitent state. Think of all which that man must suffer, even if a life of penitence should at last obtain pardon from God; think of what he must suffer, if he die without repentance. O think of this, and do not drive the wretched man down the precipice; think of this, and say, Father, forgive him.

But these are not the offences which most of us are called to forgive. The far greater part of mankind pass through life without meeting with such provocations as these. What then are the injuries which fill our streets with riot, and our cottages with quarrels; which destroy our domestic peace, and disturb our minds with anger, malice, and revenge? A christian must blush to answer this question. They are the errors and imperfections to which all are subject; they are faults of temper; they are faults which proceed from want of judgment; they are faults, for which all hope to be forgiven, and therefore which all ought

to forgive. And can we call ourselves the followers of the meek and humble Jesus, whilst every trifle is sufficient to raise our anger, and excite us to revenge? Can we hope to be forgiven our debt of ten thousand talents, while we take our fellow-servant by the throat, and throw him into prison, because he owes us a hundred pence? I hope every christian acknowledges the necessity of guarding his temper against these smaller provocations; and I beg he will attend to a few rules which may assist him in doing it.

First, endeavour to conquer your own pride. This passion is the most dangerous and the most obstinate enemy which the christian is called upon to combat. It shews itself in every shape; it meets us on every occasion. It leads us to rise up against every provocation: it leads us to expect from others more than any body is inclined or obliged to pay. The true way of conquering this enemy is to know and feel our own weakness; and this is one of the many advantages of self-examination. The man who really looks into his own heart, and knows how often he has been in the wrong almost every day of his life, will not be surprised or offended if his friends should sometimes think him so; he will suspect that it is

very possible, though he do not at that moment perceive it. Such a man will always suspect himself rather than others; and far from resenting any doubt which is expressed of his judgment, or even of the propriety of his conduct in any particular instance, he will humbly examine his own heart. If he find all right, he will with modesty and candour try to convince his friend of his mistake; if he have been wrong, he will confess the justice of the censure with humility and gratitude.

Secondly, study the dispositions, and make every charitable allowance for the faults, of your friends. We all stand in need of much indulgence, and it is a great branch of christian charity to prevent the faults of others. If your husband or your friend be subject to fits of passion, be very careful not to provoke him. Avoid all disputes, even when you are sure that you are in the right; for they may lead another to be in the wrong. "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water, therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with."\* When the moment of anger is over, how often are we ashamed to think of the trifles for which we have been contending, for which we have disturbed the

happiness of our best friends, weakened their esteem for us, ruffled their tempers and our own, and perhaps lost the favour of Gon!

Thirdly, remember that in every quarrel the person who has been least to blame is generally the most ready to be reconciled; and try your own heart by this rule. If you feel disposed to take the first step towards reconciliation, you may hope that you did not offend of malicious wickedness. In this case, do not leave time for resentment to take root in the breast of your friend. Forgive as you hope to be forgiven. generously, do it instantly. If you feel that you are unwilling to do this, suspect your own heart, and humbly on your knees entreat that God would give you grace to conquer that pride, which is the ruin of your peace and happiness. This will compose your mind; you will see things in the true light, you will feel that you were yourself to blame, and you will make every atonement in your power.

Fourthly, when you have really been injured by any person, whether a stranger or a friend, put yourself in his place, and fairly and calmly consider what could be the motives of his conduct. In most instances you will find that the fault was

not from the heart, but that he acted under some mistaken idea of his own rights, or at worst under the influence of passions which his cooler judgment would condemn. In all such cases, if it be possible that a calm explanation, by yourself or by some other friend, might remove such mistakes. christian charity requires that it should be done without delay. If his conduct do not admit of this excuse, and you have reason to believe that he has injured you from deliberate malice, you must guard against the effects of this malice, and always remember that the worst effect it possibly could have, would be making you share in the guilt of such wicked passions. Carefully guard your own heart, and let no degree of resentment transport you beyond the bounds of christian charity. Let it never prevent your doing every good office in your power, even to those who have most deeply injured you. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink."\* Such are the commands of Him, who "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously."†

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. xii. 20,

Fifthly, avoid all scenes where you are likely to be drawn into quarrels; and for that reason, amongst others, avoid every kind of vice. It is in the ale-house, it is at the gaming-table, it is in scenes of riot and unlawful pleasure, that quarrels commonly arise. "Who hath woe, who hath sorrow, who hath contention, who hath babbling, who hath wounds without cause? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine.' \*\* It is in bad company that we fall into danger of every kind; and corrupt as the world is, we may generally pass quietly through it, if we are prudent in the choice of our companions. Even if it should happen that a man is mad enough to attack you without any provocation, yet if you are yourself calm and composed, and perfectly master of your temper, it gives you a very great advantage over him. Every man who is in a passion is mad, and like other madmen should be avoided and pitied; though like other madmen he is dangerous, and in some cases he must be restrained from doing mischief. In general, however, there will be no quarrel, unless both parties are to blame. 'Guard your own conduct,

learn to command your own temper, and you will not often be engaged in disputes.

Lastly, my beloved brethren, let me sum up all by giving you one general rule, which is applicable to all cases, from the greatest to the most trifling offences; and which I wish to impress strongly on the memory of all who hear me, as the surest guard against immoderate anger and unchristian resentment. If you think yourself injured by any person, before you take any method to bring him to punishment, and, if possible, before you allow yourself to express your resentment to him, or any one else, retire for a moment, and throwing yourself on your knees before God, pray for the happiness of that person in this world and in the next. If you cannot do this from your heart, your heart is not right before GoD: and the malice which dwells there may make you more guilty in his sight, than the person who has injured you. If, on the contrary, you can sincerely pray for your enemy, there is reason to hope, that anger or resentment will never lead you into any action unworthy of the faithful disciple of Him, who, while we were yet sinners, died for our salvation; and in whose mercy we trust, that it will plead for us all, as it

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did for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

To Him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory now and for ever. Amen.

### SERMON XVI.

#### ST. LUKE ii. 37, 38.

And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with sastings and prayers, night and day. And she, coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

HAVE now, to the best of my abilities, endeavoured to explain the duties towards God and towards man, which are required of every human being. I have recommended the sacred word of God as the only light of our paths. I have enforced the necessity of prayer, of self-examination, of the religious observance of the Sabbath and the great festivals of the church, and of frequent attendance at the Lond's table. I have spoken of the reverence due to the holy name of God, and of that constant and pious

regard to his commands which ought to direct allour actions. I have mentioned the duties which belong to particular situations in life, and what is required of us, as children, as young men, as husbands, as fathers. I have shewn you where to look for protection against the temptations of vice, and for support in the hardships of poverty. I have recommended sobricty, industry, and contentment, as necessary for our own happiness in this world and the next. I have exhorted you to promote the happiness of others by mutual kindness and charity; and the good of your country by dutiful submission to the laws. I have recommended the christian duties of resignation and forgiveness of injuries; and I have constantly set before your eyes the bright example of every virtue which is left us by our Saviour Jesus Christ. In the course of these enquiries I hope I have proved that in this life, as well as in the next, happiness can only be found in the paths of piety and virtue; and that high and low, rich and poor, will alike know and feel the truth of the Prophet's awful declaration, "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked."\*

<sup>\*</sup> Isaiah xlviii. 23.

But as I wish to trace the progress of human life from first to last, and to shew the superior happiness which, in every situation, is enjoyed by the pious and virtuous man; I will now take a view of that period, to which we look forward with little expectation of enjoyment, and consider the duties of the aged. Though most men wish to live to be old, yet it must be acknowledged that many sorrows almost always attend that part of "The days of our age are threescore life years and ten, and though men be so strong that they come to fourscore years, yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow."\* These are the evil days, of which Solomon speaks, and the years in which we have no pleasure, The loss of health and of friends, perhaps of some of our faculties; the weariness and disgust which are often the consequence of disappointed hopes, and the fear with which many view the approach of death; these and other circumstances often make extreme old age a state of labour and sorrow. But still it is a state through which many of us must pass, before we leave this world; and I hope to convince you, that even in this gloomy period religion offers support and comfort sufficient to brighten

the closing scene of life, and to gild with sunshine the evening of our days. In this part of my subject, I cannot set before you the example of our Lord, for his life on earth was short; though in the course of that short life he practised all the virtues, which in age as well as in youth must be the support of his faithful servants. I have therefore taken for my text part of the interesting account which we find in St. Luke's Gospel, of · Anna, the prophetess, who was an illustrious example of piety and virtue in the last stage of life. In the same chapter we find another instance of a similar kind in good old Both these excellent persons appear to have been chiefly employed in the duties of religion, and serving God in his temple; and from their example we may learn how the latter part of life should be spent; while from the same example we are taught to hope for that heavenly consolation, for which the pious widow gave thanks to God, and which enabled Simeon to say, "LORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!"

Every period of life has its sorrows, and in general it must be confessed that age has many; but it has also advantages which should be pro-

perly considered, and thankfully acknowledged. If the amuse gents of life have lost their relish: if you say as Barzilla, did to King David, "I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat, and what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men or singing women?"\* Let it at the same time be remembered, that you are no longer exposed to the temptations which attend on every earthly enjoy-The old man rests secure after the storms of life are over. Pleasure or ambition will not now lead him astray; he will not now forfeit his honour, or his character. If his hopes in this world are over, so are his fears. He only wishes " to die in his own city, and to be buried in the grave of his father and of his mother." To those whose hearts have been fixed on the things of this world, age must indeed be a scene of disappointment and sorrow; and I do not know a more melancholy sight than the latter years of such a man; when we see him still wishing for pleasure which he can no longer enjoy, peevish and discontented with all around him, tired and disgusted with this life, and afraid of being called into the next. But very different are the feelings of the pious and virtuous man; and it shall be my endeavour, in the remainder of this discourse, to point out the comforts which such a man may still enjoy, as well as the duties which he may still perform, even in those days, which in some respects, all must confess to be evil, and in which the wicked will find no pleasure.

When a good man has passed safely through the different periods of life; when he has acted his part with honour, and secured the esteem and respect of the wise and good; above all, when he has made his peace with Gop, and hopes for acceptance through the merits of his Saviour; surely he ought to be considered with envy, rather than with pity. He no longer feels those apprehensions, with which every wise man enters into the world. He no longer dreads the allurements of pleasure, or the seductions of His trial will soon be past, and his reward is at hand. When he looks back on his past life, he will remember many errors, as well as many sorrows; but both are over and gone. He has repented of all his sins, and he trusts that the mercy of God has forgiven them. Vice has now lost her power over his mind; he knows the vanity

of all earthly pleasures; and those which he can no longer enjoy, he has learned to despise. But has he therefore no enjoyment left?. If the dance and the song no longer please, if he cannot taste what he eats or what he drinks, still nobler pleasures remain. If some friends are taken away, they only make him feel more strongly the value of those who are left. He sees the blessing of Gop descend on many generations. He sees the opening virtues of his children's chil-He is beloved and respected by them all. Their duty and affection support and comfort him. He points out to them the path in which he has walked; he instructs, he encourages them to pursue it. If he can no longer perform the active duties of life, he has more leisure to think of his Gop. To Him he now entirely devotes the remainder of his days. Like the pious widow in the text, he departs not from the temple, but serves God day and night. He sees with joy the approach of death, for death will lead him to his Saviour's presence. It will lead him to those friends whom he has lost on earth, to the spirits of just men made perfect. Yet he expects it without impatience; enjoying to the last the blessings which Gop has given

him, enjoying the happiness of all whom he loves on earth, the pleasure of doing good, the peace of a clear conscience. Patient and resigned under the infirmities of age, he considers them as sent in mercy to wean him from a world, which. amidst all its follies, and all its sorrows, we still are apt to love too well. Cheerful and content. he looks back without regret, and forward with hope and joy. Such is the old age of the righteous, and such are the pleasures, which, in a greater or less degree, may be enjoyed by all, even in that most trying period of life. But in order to secure these comforts when they are most wanted, let us consider the duties of the aged; for we must not suppose that in any situation in this world we have nothing to do.

Piety is our first duty at all times; but towards the close of life it should be our chief employment as it will be our sweetest consolation. We should disengage ourselves from the pleasures and pursuits of the world, "and having borne our share of the heat and labour of the day, the evening of life should be passed in the cool and quiet shade."\* Our thoughts, our affections, our hopes, should be drawn from this world, and should rest upon God.

<sup>\*</sup> Dr Blair.

Patience and resignation are often difficult duties; and they should be learned in youth, that they may be practised in age. As far as the weakness of human nature will permit, avoid complaints; avoid peevishness and ill-humour; and learn to bear with firmness and manly resolution the infirmities which all who live long must feel. Cheerfulness, good-humour, and a disposition to be pleased, are qualities which make men beloved at all periods of life, but particularly in old age; and it is much for our own interest to make the attentions which duty requires, as easy and pleasant as possible to those on whose kindness we must then depend for our remaining comforts. Kindness and good-will to others are particularly pleasing and respectable in age. Let your children and friends see that you still love them, and are interested for their happiness in the midst of your own sufferings. Such proofs of friendship will be deeply felt, and they will return into your own bosom.

The last duty which I shall mention is preparing for death. The best preparation for this awful event is a good life; and the man who faithfully serves GoD, and puts his whole trust in Him, need not be afraid if he should be called at a much earlier period; but the old man knows that his time must be short, and it is his duty to employ it to the best advantage. If he have any worldly affairs, which in justice to his family he ought to settle, let not this be left to the last moments of life. If he have injured any man, let him lose no time in making restitution. he have it in his power to do good to any man, let it be done without delay. Above all, let him make his peace with GoD; and leave nothing to be done on a sick bed. Patience and resignation are the only duties which we can then hope to practise, even if time be allowed, and our faculties preserved, for the exercise of these last duties of a Christian. Leave nothing undone, I most earnestly entreat you, the neglect of which may disturb the peace of your last moments; but be ready and prepared, that with a clear and undisturbed conscience you may resign your soul to God who gave it.

Before I finish this discourse, let me address a few words to the younger part of my audience. Let me intreat all who wish to live, and would fain see good days; all who hope to be happy in their own children and to find comfort when they most want it; all who hope for the blessing of

God in this life and the rewards which He has promised to good men in the next; let me entreat them all to reverence grey hairs, and never to forget the duty which youth should pay to age. This duty cannot be placed in too strong a light. It has been felt and acknowledged in every age and every country, even where the glorious light of the Gospel never shone. Every feeling of the heart seems to point it out. age is subject to many infirmities, and commonly attended with many sorrows. Let it be the business, let it be the delight of the young, to support those infirmities, and to lessen those Never forget the reverence due to an Listen to his advice with attention and respect. Give him every assistance in your power. If distress should sometimes make him fretful and impatient, bear with meekness and gentleness the infirmities to which all are subject. Do nothing to give him pain; study in every way to contribute to his pleasure; try to amuse him when his spirits fail; support him when his limbs have lost their strength; watch him on the bed of sickness; do not forsake him at the hour of death. When he shall be removed to a happier world, you will remember with pleasure

every act of kindness which you have done him. You will bitterly regret every one which you have neglected. Do not fly from the sick room; in such scenes you will learn wisdom and virtue. They will not destroy your happiness; they will only make it more lasting, and more worthy of a Christian. If you have done your duty in such scenes, they will be remembered with pleasure, when all the amusements of a thoughtless world are only recollected with a sigh. The tender offices of love and duty which you have performed for the aged, will comfort you when you also lie on a sick bed; and the blessing of God will rest on those who thus fulfil his commandments.

May all who now hear me, while they reflect on the different periods of life, learn so to number their days that they may apply their hearts unto wisdom. At whatever hour their Master call, may He find them always ready; and in youth, in manhood, or in age, may the Christian be prepared to say, "Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

## SERMON XVII.

#### ST. LUKE XXIII. 46.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the Ghost.

a Christian in his passage through this life from childhood to the brink of the grave; it only remains to consider his situation, and to compare it with that of a wicked man, at the hour of death. This shall be the subject of my present discourse; and at our next meeting I hope to close the whole, by looking with the eye of faith beyond this transitory life, and leading you to reflect on what we are permitted to know of the glories of Heaven.

However men may differ in all other respects. there is one event common to all, and that is death; yet it is astonishing to see how seldom they reflect on this subject. Consider I beseech you what it is to die. You see it every day, and one day you must feel it; but have you ever seriously reflected on death? To die, is to leave all that is dear to us here on earth. Those pleasures for which we too often neglect our duty, must end at once. The riches we have gained, must be left behind. We must see no more on earth the friends we have loved. The strong and vigorous limbs will be stiff and cold; the anxious heart will cease to beat; the bosom which once swelled with pride, will be humbled in the dust; the worm will feed on the cheek of beauty. All that the kindest friend can then do to shew his love, will be to lay us in the cold ground, and leave us there to be eaten by worms. Such is the end of human pride, and of human happiness! Such is the fate which power cannot prevent, which wisdom cannot escape. The rich man clothed in purple, and the beggar at his door, must sink alike into the grave, must alike return to that dust of which they were formed. My brethren, have you ever thought of this?

Have you reflected, that I who speak, and every one of you who hear, must be in the state which I have described; that it will happen soon; that it may happen now? I may never be allowed to speak to you again. Some of you may never see another Sunday. Before the end of a year, there is every reason to expect that some of those who are now present will be laid in the grave. In a few years, this will probably happen to many. In a few more years it must happen to all. Is it possible we should believe and know this awful truth, and yet that so few should prepare for an event which must befal every one? We try to secure wealth; we say to our soul, "thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But who remembers the dreadful answer of Gop? "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

O my brethren! these are thoughts to make the firmest tremble; and nothing except religion can support us under them. But let us view these things as Christians, and all is changed. We must die indeed; but what is death, when viewed with the light of revelation? If we leave those virtuous friends who are most dear to us on earth, it is to meet them again in heaven. There we hope for pleasures which will never fade, for riches which no rust can destroy. The voice of God will call our bodies from the grave, no more to see corruption; while every sorrow forgotten, every sin forgiven, the heir of immortal glory shall be caught up into the clouds, to meet his Lord in the air, to reign with him for ever! Do not your hearts burn within you at such thoughts as these? Is not every one who hears me ready to exclaim with the Prophet "let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."\*

But in order to this we must live the life of the righteous. All must die; but whether death is tobe the moment of joy or of terror, whether it is to be the beginning or the end of happiness, depends on the state of every man's conscience. For this reason it is, that I have so frequently and earnestly recommended to every christian the constant practice of self-examination; and advised him never to sleep, till he have endeavoured to obtain the pardon of his sins. Sooner or later he must give an account of his actions;

<sup>\*</sup> Numbers xxiii. 19.

and dreadful is the state of those who in age or sickness are forced for the first time to think on their past lives. An hour will come, when every one of us must remember what he would most wish to forget. With what horror will the wicked man then reflect on his unrepented sins, the mercies he has slighted, the time he has lost, and the dreadful judgment hanging over his head! This world does not present an object so shocking as a hardened dying sinner, who, having rejected the call of a gracious God to mercy, now trembles at the punishment which he dares not hope to escape. All the torments which he expects in the next world, seem to be already felt. O Father of Mercies, grant that we may all, by timely repentance, escape the horrors of such a death! Yet even that moment of reflection is not allowed to all. Death is sometimes so sudden as to make it impossible for us even to call on God for mercy. We see men cut off in the bloom of youth, nay even in the midst of their sins. The drunkard, the thief, the murderer, may be called before his judge, even in the act of sin; death may be the immediate consequence of his crime; in a moment, no time allowed for repentance, no pause between the sin and the

punishment. O think of this, ye that forget Gop; think of this, and repent! The Saviour of the world still allows you to hope for mercy; but lose not an hour, for this hour may be your last. And may they, whose hearts are not thus hardened, consider how necessary it is to guard against this dreadful state by constant watchful-No man who goes out to his work in the morning, is sure that he shall return at night. No man who lies down to rest at night, is sure that he shall ever see the light of another day. What manner of persons, then, ought we to be? With these things strongly impressed on our hearts, let me again entreat you to watch over your own souls, and never to sleep without endeavouring to be reconciled with Gop. If we do this, we need not dread the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor the arrow that flieth at noon-day; for whether we live or die, we are still in the hands of that protecting Saviour who will be our guide unto death, and after death will receive us to glory.

The best support of the Christian in the hour of trial is the remembrance of the death of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. We shall find in the account of that event, given by all the Evangelists,

a pattern of all that is great and noble; and an example, which, as far as the weakness of our nature will permit, we must humbly endeavour to imitate. We are told that our Saviour earnestly prayed to Gon; and, having done so, went forth to meet his persecutors. Through all the sufferings which followed, he was patient and resigned. His tenderness for his parent and his friends appeared in his last agonies. compassion for the unhappy man who suffered with him, was expressed by a promise that he should be with him in Paradise. His forgiveness of his murderers appeared in his last prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Then having completed the work for which he came into the world, he resigned his soul to God, and said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!" and having said this, he gave up the Ghost.

This is the glorious pattern which we must try to imitate; and in order to do so, we must, while we are in health, prepare for a change which cannot be long delayed. I have already observed, that the best preparation for death is a good life; and the man who faithfully serves God, and trusts in the merits of his Saviour, will be always

ready when he is called. But if age or sickness point out to us the near approach of this great event, let the pious Christian collect all his strength to meet it with firmness, and let him pray for support to that Almighty Deliverer. without whose assistance our strength is but weakness. Let him to the last shew kindness to his friends, and let him freely forgive his enemies. Let him ask the assistance of a clergyman to pray with him, and to administer the holy sacrament. Before he receives it, let him humbly confess to God the sins of his past life, and put his whole trust in his mercy through Christ. Then let him try to think only of the glorious change which he is soon to experience; let him call to remembrance the gracious promises of GoD; and firm in faith, and strong in hope, let him resign his soul to Him who gave it. These duties should not be left to the last hour. sufficient to that hour is the evil thereof; but however severe his bodily sufferings may be, the Christian who is well prepared, will feel the support of his Gop. In that hour the good man is often distinguished by his peculiar grace and favour. I have seen such men, nay, I have seen the tender frame of a weak and delicate

woman, support the severest sufferings, not only with patience, but with joy; happy in being found worthy to suffer for Christ's sake, and triumphing in the immediate prospect of an eternal reward. In general, death is not attended with such sufferings; and very frequently, I believe, it is attended with no suffering at all; but this is uncertain, and we should be prepared to endure pain with patience and resignation, at whatever part of our lives it may be sent to us, because at some part or other of life it may be expected by all. We know not the degree of pain which we are appointed to suffer in this life; but we know what is far more important, that after death dreadful sufferings are prepared for those who will not repent. Let us all consider this, and seek the LORD while He may be found.

They who as yet enjoy health and strength, should not drive the thoughts of death from their minds, but endeavour to lessen its horrors by making it familiar. Let them never neglect the duty which they owe to their dying friends, on account of any pain which it may give to themselves. Many useful lessons are to be learnt in the house of mourning. Never forsake those whom duty or affection calls you to attend

at that awful moment. Much comfort may often be given, even at the last. When nothing else remains to be done, pray for them to Him who will never leave them nor forsake them. Remember that a dying person is often sensible of what passes around him, much longer than those who are not accustomed to such scenes would suppose. Carefully avoid shocking them by saying any thing which they should not hear; and, as long as it is possible, let them be sensible that they have the comfort of your kindness and of your prayers. When all is over, do not try to banish the serious thoughts which such a sight must awaken in your mind. Treasure them up in your heart against your own hour of trial. I would not wish even very young persons to be always kept away from such scenes. Let them early learn to see death in the true light. This will banish vain and foolish fears. should be taught not to be afraid of the dead; they should know there is no more danger in a church-yard than in any other place. Those who rest there, can never rise till the day of judgment. We shall go to them, but they never will return to us. A good man should learn to fear nothing except GoD; but young persons,

as well as old, should remember that they must die. If an opportunity offer of shewing them that death is not really terrible to a Christian, it may be to them a very useful lesson. They should learn never to fly from distress, which they can relieve, but to be kind and compassionate; and they should learn the vanity of all earthly things, by seeing that they lead only to the grave. These reflections will not rob a man of happiness whilst he is young, and they will secure his possession of it when he is old. They will teach him to remember his Creator in the days of his youth; they will teach him to fear Gop, and to know no other fear. "I have sent for you," said the great and good Mr. Addison to a young man whom he loved, "I have sent for you to see how a Christian can die." It is indeed a glorious sight, and the triumph of our holy religion.

And now let me entreat you to remember in what manner we ought to consider death. It is an awful change to all, but it should be an object of terror only to wicked men. To them, indeed, it is dreadful beyond the power of language to express; but it must be endured by them and by us all. Other evils may possibly be avoided,

some crimes escape the punishment of human laws, and some wicked men appear to be in great prosperity; but that prosperity must soon be over. "It is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment."\* This ought to make every man tremble, who has not reason to hope for the mercy of GoD; but to such men only death is terrible. To the humble follower of Christ this last enemy appears as a kind friend. Death is to him the road to life; it has no terror in the eyes of the true believer, He views it only as the gate of Heaven, the appointed path to eternal joy. Death will end all his sorrows, death will confirm all his hopes, death will seal the pardon of all his sins, death will crown all his virtues. Death has no power to keep the Christian from his Saviour and his Gop. Like the great Captain of his salvation, he will rise triumphant from the tomb; he will look back on this world as on a dream when one awaketh; he will view its pleasures with contempt, its sorrows with a smile. He will hear that voice which calls to every faithful servant of Christ, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the

<sup>•</sup> Hebrews ix. 27.

foundation of the world."\* These are the blessings of redeeming love, these are the hopes, these are the prospects, which support the dying Christian. Under the severest sufferings, nay, even under the deepest sense of his own weakness and imperfection, on the bed of sickness, and at the hour of dissolution, he is still enabled to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Now to him who for our sakes overcame death, and opened to us the gate of everlasting life, to Him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory now and for ever. Amen.

\* Matt. xxv. 34.

## SERMON XVIII.

#### ST. MATTHEW XXVI. 64.

Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.

The certainty of that great event, which every Christian expects, as the completion of all his hopes; and every pious heart is prepared to answer, "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

In discoursing on a subject which is so far above the reach of our weak understandings, it is my intention carefully to avoid saying any thing which is not revealed in scripture. It shall be my humble endeavour to collect from the word of God, what is told us concerning the judgment of the great day, and the happiness or misery to which every human being will then be sentenced.

If ever there was a subject worthy to fix the attention of a reasonable creature, it is that on which I am now to speak. All the little distinctions of this world shrink to nothing in comparison with it. All the studies which have employed the learned, all the glories which attend the conqueror, appear unworthy of regard. We know and feel that all are vanity and vexation of spirit. This is a subject in which we can gain no information, except from the revealed word of God. Of this the heathens knew nothing, and frequently wished for instruction. They committed the bodies of their friends to the earth. or to the flames, and knew not that they were ever to rise again. They resigned their souls to God, without any sure and certain hope that He would make them for ever happy. All human prospects end with death, and the eye of reason can pierce no farther. None ever returned to tell the secrets of the invisible world. Little remained of that light which Gop had given to our first parents. The hopes of the best men were mixed with doubt and uncertainty, and it was only by death they were taught those glorious truths which every Christian knows; it was only by death they were taught that there

is a reward for the righteous, that there is a God who judgeth the earth.

But to us, my brethren, the Gospel has brought life and immortality to light. There we learn, that when our blessed LORD had ascended into Heaven in the presence of his disciples, and a cloud received him out of their sight; two men stood by them in white apparel, who said, "Why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven."\* Our Saviour in my text informs us, that we shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven. He tells us, that "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the Holy Angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations."†

"Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him." Such is the language of scripture, and such is the firm belief of every Christian. Of the day and the hour knoweth no man, but we all know that the day of the LORD will come, and

<sup>\*</sup> Acts i. 11. + Matt. xxv. 31. ; Rev. i. 7.

blessed is he whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching!

"He cometh indeed, but how changed! How different his appearance to what it once was! How shall we be able to conceive of it as it deserves; to raise our thoughts from the voice of the tender Babe in the manger, bewailing our sins that brought him thither, to the voice of the Son of Goo, from which the heavens and the earth shall flee away, and no place shall be found for them any more for ever? Yet so it is. Behold, He who came in swaddling clothes, cometh with clouds. He who came to preach the day of salvation, cometh again to proclaim the day of vengeance. He who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, leads his ten thousands to the prey, as the lion of the tribe of Judah. He who cried not, nor lifted up his voice against his enemies on earth, thunders with the glorious voice of his excellency against them from Heaven. who quenched not the smoaking flax, extinguishes the great lights of the world, darkens the sun, and turns the moon into blood; commands the stars from their stations, and the dead from their graves; shakes the powers of Heaven, and

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the foundations of the earth, and all hearts that are not fixed on him."\*

He cometh to judge the world, and before him shall be gathered all nations. To him all hearts are open; to him all crimes are known. In vain may his enemies call on the mountains to cover them; they can be no longer hid. Every secret sin, every wicked thought, will then be known; the time of repentance will be past, the day of vengeance will be come. A dreadful sentence is recorded in the word of truth, and we must not conceal it. We must give the warning, and shew you the terrors of the LORD. He hath spoken, and we cannot reverse it. "The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment!" "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels."t "The fearful, the unbelieving, and the abominable, the murderers and whoremongers, the sorcerers and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; this is the second death."<sup>‡</sup> These are the words of scripture; the Minister of the Gospel dares not change them.

<sup>\*</sup> Bishop Horne's Sermons. † Matt. xxv. 41. ‡ Rev. xxi. 8.

However he may grieve for others, however he may tremble for himself, it is his duty to declare the truth. "Gop is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it?"\* These are the terrors which should be strongly impressed on every human being. "Be not afraid of them who kill the body, but fear Him who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear Him."† If Christianity be true, if we have any reason to trust in the merit of our Saviour's sufferings, ifwe have any reason to hope for happiness in Heaven, we have the very same reason to believe and to know that every sinner who will not repent, must expect punishments, of which no degree of misery that can be felt on earth, can give us an idea. Think of this, ye who would tremble at the sentence of an earthly judge, at the sufferings of an hour! Think of the worm that never dies; think of the fire that never will be quenched.

But to those who look for their LORD, he shall appear in a very different character. The judgment of that great day, while it reveals every

Numb. xxiii. 19. † Luke xii. 4.

secret sin, will at the same time discover every unknown virtue. There the patient will be comforted, there the humble will be exalted. There it will be seen that the secret prayer was not offered in vain, that the hour of self-examination was not lost. The poor, the weak, the ignorant, if rich in faith and virtue, will there be raised far above those who despised them. There he who suffered in this world, will bless God for calling him to repentance by pain or sorrow. The wish to do good, which arose in the hearts of those who had nothing to give, will there be rewarded. The Saviour of the world. terrible in vengeance, but rich in mercy, will call his sheep by name. He who died for their sins, will accept their sincere, though imperfect obedience. The humble endeavour to please him, the tear of penitence, the prayer of faith, will reach the Throne of Grace. He who washed us from our sins in his own blood will complete the work of redeeming love; he will say to every faithful servant, "Enter thou into the joy of thy LORD."

Of the happiness of heaven we can form no idea; and here, as before, I will repeat the words of scripture, without presuming to add any

thing to them. We are told by St. Paul, that "Eve hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which Gon hath prepared for them that love him."\* From scripture we learn that there will be nomore sorrow, nor crying; and that GoD shall wipe all tears from their eyes. From scripture we learn, that they will be as the Angels of GoD; there will be no more sin, there will be no more death. From scripture we learn, that they will follow the Lamb for ever, and join with all the host of heaven in singing, Hallelujah, for the LORD GOD Omnipotent reigneth, and he shall reign for ever and ever, King of kings, and Lord of lords! Such are the hopes, such are the expectations, of a Christian; such are the promises which we have received from Gop himself. For ever safe under his protection, their trial over, their pardon sealed, those who attain that blessed state can sin no more. No improper wishes, no wicked inclinations, no arts of the tempter, can ever more disturb their peace. Pain and sorrow will be no more. United with mutual love, which human passions will never more disturb, they will be happy, and they will

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be happy for ever. Hours, days, years, ages will pass in constant enjoyment, and still their prospect will know no bounds. They will be always increasing in wisdom and virtue, going on from strength to strength, praising and blessing God for ever and ever.

And does any task seem hard which procures for us such a rich reward? Is any thing too much, to prove our love and gratitude to such a Master? Is his service hard, when he calls us to do for his sake what, if we knew our own interest, we should do for our own; to renounce follies which the wise must despise, and vices which the good must detest?—A man who only regards his own health, will not make himself a beast by drunkenness or lust. A man who values his own happiness, will not make himself hated by cruelty and injustice; he will not be unkind to his friends, nor disloyal to his King. "What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy What doth He require of thee, but to pursue thy own true interest, to be happy in this world and in the next? If we are sometimes called to suffer, we know that it is only to make

us more worthy of his love who suffered for us. He has left us his example, He has promised us his support, He has set before us an eternal reward. Could such a reward be too dearly purchased by any degree of suffering during our short life on earth? Thousands have purchased that reward by sufferings to which at present we are not exposed. Thousands have glorified Gon in torments and in flames. "They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted. tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth."\* Happy are they who have thus shewn their love to Him who died for them; and let us all think ourselves happy, if by any means we can obtain his favour. Whether He crown us with blessings, or try us with afflictions, still let us love and thank Him. He only knows what is good for us; and secure under his protection, trusting in his mercy, and relying on his gracious promises, let every Christian say, and say it from his heart, "Not my will, but thine be done!" "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."\*

And now, my beloved brethren, consider all that has been said. I have endeavoured to shew you the path of life; and may God give you grace to walk in it to the end. "I call Heaven and earth to record this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live." I will sum up all in the words of the Royal Preacher. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."†

<sup>\*</sup> Heb. xii. 1. † Eccles. xii. 13.

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"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you." And may He who hath called us to eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. May He be your guide unto death; and after death, may He receive you into glory! Now to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

\* 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

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